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The Ambitious Step-mother.

A

TRAGEDY.

As 'twas Acted at the *New Theatre*
in *Little-Lincolns-Inn-Fields*.

By His Majesty's Servants.

By *N. Rowe, Esq;*

— *Decet hæc dare dona noveream.*

Ovid *Metam.* lib. 9.

*Vane Ligur, frustra; animis elate superbis
Nequicquam tentasti lubricus artes
Advenit qui vestra dies muliebribus armis
Verba redargueret.*

Virg. *Æn.* lib. 11.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Peter Buck, at the Sign of the Temple, near the
Inner-Temple-Gate, in Fleet-street. 1701.

The Ambitious Step-mother

TRAGEDY

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in Little Lincoln-Inn Fields.

By His Majesty's Servants.

By N. Rowe, Esq.

—Dedicated to the Hon. the Lord

Will. Pitt, Esq.

Printed by J. Smith, at the Sign of the
Three Kings, in Pall-mall.

1733.

LONDON

Printed for Peter Baskett, at the Sign of the Three Kings, in Pall-mall.

TO THE
Right Honourable
THE
Earl of Jersey.

Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's Household, &c.

My Lord,

IF any thing may atone for the Liberty I take in offering this trifle to your Lordship, it is, that I will Engage not to be guilty of the Common Vice of Dedications, nor pretend to give the World an account of the many good qualities they ought to admire in your Lordship. I hope I may reckon on it as some little piece of merit, in an age where there are so many people write Panegyrics, and so few deserve 'em. I am sure you ought not to sit for your Picture, to so ill a hand as mine. Men of your Lordship's Figure and Station, tho' Useful and Ornamental to the Age they live in, are yet reserv'd for the Labours of the Historian, and the Entertainment of Posterity; nor ought to be aspers'd with such pieces of Flattery while living, as may render the true History suspected

The Epistle Dedicatory.

pected to those that come after. That which should take up all my Care at present, is most humbly to beg your Lordships pardon for Importuning you upon this account ; for imagining that your Lordship, (whose hours are all dedicated to the best and most important uses) can have any leisure for this piece of Poetry. I beg, my Lord, that you will receive it, as it was meant, a mark of my Entire Respect and Veneration.

I hope it may be some advantage to me, that the Town has not receiv'd this Play ill ; to have depended meerly upon your Lordships good nature, and have offer'd something without any degree of merit, would have been an unpardonable fault, especially to so good a Judge. The Play it self, as I present it to your Lordship, is a much more perfect Poem than it is in the representation on the Stage. I was led into an Error in the writing of it, by thinking that it would be easier to retrench than to add : But when I was at last necessitated, by reason of the extreme length, to cut off near six hundred Lines, I found that it was maim'd by it to a great disadvantage. The Fable (which has no manner of relation to any part of true History,) was left dark and intricate, for want of a great part of the narration, which was left out in the first Scene ; and the Chain and Connexion, which ought to be in the Dialogue, was interrupted in many other places. But since what was omitted in the Acting, is now kept in, I hope it may indifferently Entertain your Lordship at an unbending hour. The faults which are most generally found, (and which I could be very proud of submitting to your Lordship's Judgment, if you can have leisure for so trivial a cause,) are, that the Catastrophe in the fifth Act is barbarous, and shocks the Audience. Some people, whose Judgment I ought to have a deference for, have told me that they wisht I had given the latter part of the story quite another turn ; that *Artaxerxes* and *Amestris* ought to have been preserv'd, and made happy in the Conclusion of the Play ; that besides the satisfaction which the Spectators would have had to have seen two Vertuous (or at least Innocent) Characters, rewarded and successful, there might have been also a more Noble and Instructive Moral drawn that way. I must confess if this be an Error, (as I perhaps it may,) it is a voluntary one

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and an Error of my Judgment: Since in the writing I actually made such a sort of an Objection to my self; and chose to wind up the story this way. Tragedies have been allow'd, I know, to be written both ways very beautifully. But since Terror and Pity are laid down for the Ends of Tragedy, by the great Master and Father of Criticism, I was always inclin'd to fancy, that the last and remaining Impressions, which ought to be left on the minds of an Audience, should proceed from one of these two. They should be struck with Terror in several parts of the Play, but always Conclude and go away with Pity, a sort of regret proceeding from good nature, which, tho an uneasiness, is not always disagreeable, to the person who feels it. It was this passion that the famous Mr *Otway* succeeded so well in touching, and must and will at all times affect people, who have any tenderness or humanity. If therefore I had sav'd *Artaxerxes* and *Amestris*, I believe (with submission to my Judges) I had destroy'd the greatest occasion for Compassion in the whole Play. Any body may perceive, that she is rais'd to some degrees of happiness, by hearing that her Father and Husband are living, (whom she had suppos'd dead,) and by seeing the Enemy and Persecuter of her Family dying at her feet, purposefully, that the turn of her death may be more surprizing and pitiful. As for that part of the Objection, which says, that Innocent persons ought not to be shewn unfortunate; The success and general approbation, which many of the best Tragedies that have been writ, and which were built on that foundation, have met with, will be a sufficient answer for me.

That which they call the Poetical Justice, is, I think, strictly observ'd, the two principal Contrivers of Evil, the Statesman and Priest, are punish'd with death; and the Queen is depos'd from her authority by her own Son; which, I suppose, will be allowed as the severest mortification that could happen to a woman of her Imperious temper.

If there can be any excuse for my Entertaining your Lordship with this *Detail* of Criticisms, it is, That I would have this first mark of the honour I have for your Lordship appear with as few faults as possible. Did not the prevailing Character of your Lordship's Excellent humanity and good nature encourage me,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

me, what ought I not to fear from the niceness of your Taste and Judgment? The delicacy of your reflexions may be very fatal to so rough a Draught as this is; but if I will believe, (as I am sure I ought to do) all men that I have heard speak of your Lordship, they bid me hope every thing from your Goodness. This is that I must sincerely own, which made me extremely Ambitious of your Lordship's Patronage for this Piece. I am but too sensible, that there are a multitude of faults in it; but since the good nature of the Town has cover'd, or not taken notice of 'em, I must have so much discretion, as not to look with an affected nicety into 'em my self. With all the Faults and Imperfections which it may have, I must own, I shall be yet very well satisfied with it, if it gives me an opportunity of reckoning my self from this time,

Your Lordship's most Obedient,

and devoted humble Servant,

N. Rowe.

The

The Prologue. Spoke by Mr Batterton.

IF Dying Lovers yet deserve a Tear,
If a sad story of a Maids despair,
Yet move Compassion in the pitying fair,
This day the Poet does his Art employ,
The soft accessses of your Souls to try.
Nor let the Stoick boast his mind unmov'd,
The Brute Philosopher, who ne're has prov'd
The Joy of Loving or of being Lov'd;
Who scorns his humane nature to confess,
And striving to be more than man, is less.
Nor let the men, the weeping fair accuse
Those kind protectors of the Tragick Muse,
Whose Tears did moving Otway's labours crown,
And made the poor Monimia's Grief their own:
Those Tears, their art, not weakness has confest,
Their Grief approv'd the niceness of their taste,
And they wept most, because they judg'd the best.
O cou'd this Age's Writers hope to find
An Audience to Compassion thus inclin'd,
The Stage would need no Farce, nor Song nor Dance,
Nor Capering Monsieur brought from Active France.
Clinch and his Organ Pipe, his Dogs and Bear,
To native Barnet might again repair,
Or breathe with Captain Otter, Bankside Air.
Majestick Tragedy shou'd once agen
In Purple Pomp adorn the swelling Scene.
Her search shou'd ransack all the Ancient's store,
The Fortunes of their Loves and Arms explore,
Such as might grieve you, but shou'd please you more.
What Shakespear durst not, this bold Age shou'd do,
And famous Greek and Latian Beanties shew.

Shakespear, whose Genius to its self a Law,
 Cou'd men in every height of Nature draw,
 And Copy'd all but women that he saw.
 Those Ancient Heroines your concern shou'd move,
 Their Grief and Anger much, but most their Love ;
 For in the account of every Age we find
 The best and fairest of that Sex were kind,
 To Pity always, and to Love inclin'd.
 Assert, ye fair ones, who in Judgment sit,
 Your Ancient Empire over Love and Wit ;
 Reform our Sense, and teach the men t' Obey,
 They'll leave their Tumbling if you lead the way.
 Be but what those before to Otway were ;
 O were you but as kind, we know you are as fair.

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

Artaxerxes, Prince of Persia, Eldest Son to the King	
Arfaces, by a former Queen.	Mr. Verbrugen.
Artaban, Son to Arfaces, by Artemisa.	Mr. Booth.
Memnon, Formerly General to Arfaces, now disgrac'd ; a friend to Artaxerxes.	Mr. Batterton.
Mirza, First Minister of State, in the interest of Artemisa and Artaban.	Mr. Freeman.
Magas, Priest of the Sun, friend to Mirza and the Queen.	Mr. Bowman.
Cleanthes, Friend to Artaban.	Mr. Pack.
Orchanes, Captain of the Guards to the Queen.	Mr. Baily.

W O M E N.

Artemisa, Formerly the Wife of Tiribasus a Persian Lord, now married to the King, and Queen of Persia.	Mrs. Barry.
Amestris, Daughter to Memnon, in love with, and belov'd by Artaxerxes.	Mrs. Bracegirdle.
Cleone, Daughter to Mirza, in love with Artaxerxes, and belov'd by Artaban.	Mrs. Bowman.
Beliza, Confident to Cleone.	Mrs. Martin.

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ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Royal Palace.*

Enter at several Doors Mirza and Magas.

Mir. **W**Hat bringst thou, *Magas*? Say, how fares the King?
Mag. As one, whom when we number with the
 We say the most we can; tho sure it must (living,
 Be happier far, to quit a wretched being,
 Than keep it on such terms: For as I enter'd
 The Royal Lodging, an universal horror
 Struck thro my Eyes, and chill'd my very Heart;
 The chearful day was every where shut out
 With care, and left a more than midnight darkness,
 Such as might ev'n be felt: A few dim Lamps,
 That feebly lifted up their sickly heads,
 Lookt faintly thro the shade, and made it seem
 More dismal by such light; while those that waited,
 In solemn sorrow, mixt with wild amazement,
 Observ'd a dreadful silence.

Mirz. Didst thou see him?

Mag. My Lord, I did; treading with gentle steps,
 I reacht the Bed, which held the poor remains
 Of great *Arsaces*, just as I approacht,
 His drooping lids, that seem'd for ever clos'd,
 Were faintly rear'd, to tell me that he liv'd:
 The balls of sight, dim and depriv'd of motion,

B

Sparkled

Sparkled no more with that Majestick fire,
 At which ev'n Kings have trembled ; but had lost
 Their common useful office, and were shaded
 With an eternal night ; struck with a sight,
 That shew'd me humane nature fain so low,
 I hastily retir'd.

Mirz. He dyes too soon ;
 And fate if possible must be delay'd ;
 The thought that labours in my forming brain,
 Yet crude and immature, demands more time.
 Have the Physicians giv'n up all their hopes ?
 Cannot they add a few days to a Monarch,
 In recompence of thousand vulgar fates,
 Which their Drugs daily hasten ?

Mag. As I pass'd
 The outward Rooms, I found 'em in Consult ;
 I askt 'em if their art was at a stand,
 And could not help the King ; they shook their heads,
 And in most grave and solemn wise, unfolded
 Matter, which little purported, but words
 Rankt in right learned phrase ; all I could learn, was ;
 That Nature's kindly warmth was quite extinct,
 Nor could the breath of art kindle again
 Th' Etherial fire.

Mirz. My Royal Mistress *Artemisa's* fate,
 And all her Son Young *Artaban's* high hopes,
 Hang on this lucky Crisis ; since this day,
 The haughty *Artaxerxes* and old *Memnon*
 Enter *Persopolis* : The yearly Feast
 Devoted to our glorious God the Sun,
 Hides their designs under a holy veil ;
 And thus Religion is a mask for Faction.
 But let their Guardian *Genii* still be watchful,
 For if they chance to nod, my waking vengeance
 Shall surely catch that moment to destroy 'em.

Mag. 'Tis said the fair *Amestris*, *Memnon's* Daughter,
 Comes in their company.

Mirz.

Mirz. That fatal Beauty,
With most malignant influence, has crost
My first and great Ambition. When my Brother,
The great *Cleander* fell by *Memnon's* hand,
(You know the story of our Houses quarrel)
I sought the King for Justice on the Murderer;
And to confirm my interest in the Court,
In confidence of mighty wealth and power,
A long descent from Noble Ancestors,
And somewhat of the Beauty of the Maid,
I offer'd my *Cleone* to the Prince
Fierce *Artaxerxes*; he, with rude disdain
Refus'd the proffer; and to grate me more,
Publicly own'd his passion for *Amestris*;
And in despite ev'n of his Fathers Justice,
Espous'd the Cause of *Memnon*.

Mag. Ev'n from that noted *Æra*, I remember
You dated all your service to the Queen,
Our Common Mistress.

Mirz. 'Tis true, I did so; Nor was it in vain;
She did me right, and satisfy'd my vengeance;
Memnon was banisht, and the Prince disgrac'd
Went into Exile with him. Since that time,
Since I have been admitted to her Council,
And have seen her, with unerring judgment guide
The Reins of Empire, I have been amaz'd,
To see her more than manly strength of Soul,
Cautious in good success, in bad unshaken;
Still arm'd against the uncertain turns of Chance,
Untoucht by any weakness of her Sex,
Their Superstition, Pity, or their Fear;
And is a Woman only in her Cunning.
What story tells of great *Semiramis*,
Or Rolling Time, that gathers as it goes,
Has added more, such *Artemisa* is.

Mag. Sure 'twas a mark of an uncommon Genius,
To bend a Soul like that of great *Arfaces*,
And Charm him to her sway.

Mirz. Certainly Fate,
Or somewhat like the force of Fate, was in it;
And still whene're remembrance sets that scene
Before my eyes, I view it with amazement.

Mag. I then was young, a stranger to the Court,
And only took the story as reported
By different Fame, you must have known it better.

Mirz. Indeed I did, then favour'd by the King,
And by that means a sharer in the secret.
'Twas on a day of publick Festival,
When Beauteous *Artemisa* stood to view,
Behind the Covert of a Golden Lattice,
When King and Court returning from the Temple;
When just as by her stand *Arfaces* past,
The Windows, by design or chance, fell down,
And to his view expos'd her blushing Beauties.
She seem'd surpriz'd, and presently withdrew,
But ev'n that moment was an age in Love;
So was the Monarchs heart for passion moulded,
So apt to take at first the soft impression.
Soon as we were alone, I found the Evil
Already past a Remedy, and vainly
Urg'd the resentment of her injur'd Lord:
His Love was deaf to all.

Mag. Was *Tiribasus* absent?

Mir. He was then General of the Horse,
Under old *Memnon* in the Median War.
But if that distant view so much had charm'd him,
Imagine how he burnt, when, by my means,
He view'd her Beauties nearer, when each action,
And every graceful sound conspir'd to charm him:
Joy of her Conquest, and the hopes of Greatness,
Gave Lustre to her Charms, and made her seem
Of more than mortal Excellence. In short,
After some faint resistance, like a Bride
That strives a while, tho eager for the bliss,
The furious King Enjoy'd her.
And to secure their Joys, a snare was laid

For her unthinking Lord, in which he fell
Before the fame of this could reach his Ears.
Since that, she still has by successful Arts
Maintain'd that power, which first her beauty gain'd.

Mag. With deepest foresight, wisely has she laid
A sure foundation of the future greatness
Of *Artaban*, her only darling Son.

Each busie thought, that rous within her breast,
Labours for him; the King, when first he sicken'd,
Declar'd he should succeed him in the Throne.

Mir. That was a point well gain'd; nor were the Eldership
Of *Artaxerxes* worth our least of fears,
If *Memnon's* interest did not prop his Cause.
Since then they stand secur'd, by being joyn'd,
From reach of open force; it were a Masterpiece
Worthy a thinking head, to sow division
And seeds of jealousy, to lose those bonds,
Which knit and hold 'em up, that so divided,
With ease they might be ruin'd.

Mag. That's a difficulty, next to impossible.

Mir. Cease to think so;

The wise and active conquer difficulties,
By daring to attempt 'em; sloth and folly
Shiver and shrink at sight of toil and hazard,
And make th' impossibility they fear;
Ev'n *Memnon's* temper seems to give th' occasion;
Of wrong impatient, headlong to revenge;
Tho bold, yet wants that faculty of thinking,
That should direct his anger. Valiant fools
Were made by Nature for the wise to work with;
They are their tools, and 'tis the sport of Statesmen,
When Heroes knock their knotty heads together,
And fall by one another.

Mag. What you've said,
Has wak'd a thought in me which may be lucky;
Ere he was banisht for your Brothers murder,
There was a friendship 'twixt us; and tho then

I left

I left his barren soil, to root my self
More safely, under your auspicious shade,
Yet still pretending tyes of ancient Love,
At his arrival here I'll visit him;
Whence this advantage may at least be made,
To ford his shallow Soul.

Mirz. Oh much, much more;
'Twas happily remembred, nothing gulls
These open, unsuspecting fools, like friendship;
Dull heavy things! whom Nature has left honest
In meer frugality, to save the Charge
She's at in setting out a thinking Soul:
Who, since their own short understandings reach
No farther than the present, think ev'n the wise;
Like them, disclose the secrets of their breasts,
Speak what they think, and tell tales of themselves:
Thy function too will varnish o're our arts,
And sanctifie dissembling.

Mag. Yet still I doubt,
His caution may draw back, and fear a snare.

Mirz. Tell him, the better to assist the fraud,
That ev'n I wish his friendship, and would gladly
Forget that cause of hate, which long has held us
At mortal distance, give up my revenge,
A grateful Offering to the publick peace.

Mag. Could you afford him such a bribe as that,
A Brothers blood yet unatton'd—

Mirz. No *Magar*,
It is not in the power of fate to raze
That thought from out my memory;
Eternal night, 'tis true, may cast a shade
On all my faculties, extinguish knowledge;
And great Revenge may with my Being cease;
But while I am, that ever will remain,
And in my latest Spirits still survive.
Yet, I would have thee promise that, and more,
The friendship of the Queen, the restitution
Of his Command, and Honours, that his Daughter

Shall

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Shall be the Bride of *Antaban*; say any thing;
Thou knowst the Faith of Courtiers, and their Oaths,
Like those of Lovers, the Gods laugh at 'em.

Mag. Doubt not my zeal to serve our Royal Mistress,
And in her Interest yours, my Friend and Patron.

Mirz. My worthy Priest! still be my friend, and share
The utmost of my power, by greatness rais'd. *Embracing.*
Thou like the God thou serv'st, shall shine aloft,
And with thy influence rule the under world.
But see! the Queen appears; she seems to muse,
Her thoughtful Soul, labours with some event
Of high import, which bustles like an Embryo
In its dark room, and longs to be disclos'd.
Retire, lest we disturb her. *They retire to the side of the Stage.*

Enter the Queen attended.

Qu. Be fixt, my Soul, fixt on thy own firm basis!
Be constant to thy self; nor know the weakness,
The poor Irresolution of my Sex:
Disdain those shews of danger, that would bar
My way to glory. Ye Diviner Pow'rs!
By whom 'tis said we are, from whose bright Beings
Those active sparks were struck which move our clay,
I feel, and I Confess the Etherial energy,
That busie restless principle, whose appetite
Is only pleas'd with greatness like your own:
Why have you clogg'd it then with dull mass,
And shut it up in Woman? Why debas'd it
To an Inferiour part of the Creation?
Since, your own heavenly hands mistook my lot,
'Tis you have err'd, not I. Could Fate e're mean
Me, for a Wife, a Slave to *Tiribasus*!
To such a thing as he! a Wretch! a Husband!
Therefore in just assertion of my self,
I shook him off, and past those narrow limits,
Which Laws contrive in vain for Souls born great.

There

There is not, must not be a bound for greatness;
 Power gives a sanction, and makes all things just.
 Ha! *Mirza*! Worthy Lord! I saw thee not, *Seeing Mirza.*
 So busie were my faculties in thought.

Mir. Thé thoughts of Princes dwell in sacred privacy,
 Unknown and venerable to the vulgar; *Bowing.*
 And like a Temples innermost recesses,
 None enters, to behold the hallow'd mysteries,
 Unbidden of the God that dwells within.

Qu. Wise *Mirza*! were my Soul a Temple, fit
 For Gods, and Godlike Counsels to inhabit,
 Thee only would I choose of all mankind,
 To be the Priest, still favour'd with access;
 Whose piercing Wit, sway'd by unerring Judgment,
 Might mingle ev'n with assembled Gods,
 When they devise unchangeable decrees,
 And call 'em Fate.

Mirz. Whate're I am, each faculty,
 The utmost power of my Exerted Soul,
 Preserves a being only for your service;
 And when I am not yours, I am no more:

Qu. Time shall not know an end of my acknowledgments,
 But every day of our continu'd lives
 Be witness of my gratitude, to draw
 The knot, which holds our Common Interest, closer;
 Within six days, my Son, my *Artaban*,
 Equally dear to me as life and glory,
 In publick shall Espouse the fair *Cleone*,
 And be my pledge of Everlasting Amity.

Mir. O Royal Lady! you out-bid my service;
 And all returns are vile, but words the poorest.

Qu. Enough! be as thou hast been, still my friend,
 I ask no more. But I observe of late,
 Your Daughter grows a stranger to the Court;
 Know you the cause?

Mirz. A melancholy Girl;
 Such in her Infancy her Temper was,
 Soft ev'n beyond her Sexes tenderness;

By nature pitiful, and apt to grieve
For the mishaps of others, and so make
The sorrows of the wretched world her own:
Her Closet and the Gods share all her time,
Except when (only by some Maid attended)
She seeks some shady solitary Grove,
Or by the gentle murmur of some Brook
Sits sadly listning to a tale of sorrow,
Till with her tears she swell the narrow stream.

Qu. It is not well, these thoughts must be remov'd :
That eating Canker Grief, with wasteful spight,
Preys on the Rosie bloom of Youth and Beauty :
But Love shall chace away these clouds of sadness ;
My Son shall breathe so warm a gale of sighs,
As shall dissolve those Isicles, that hang
Like death about her heart.

Attend us, holy *Magus*, to the King,
Nor cease to importune the mighty Gods
To grant him health, tho much I fear in vain.

Exit Queen, Magas, and Attendants.

Manet Mirza.

Mirz. This meddling Priest longs to be found a fool ;
Thinks he that *Memnon*, Souldier as he is,
Thoughtless, and dull, will listen to his soothing ?
Howe're, I gave his wise proposal way,
Nay, urg'd him to go on ; the shallow fraud
Will ruine him for ever with my Enemies,
And make him firmly mine, spight of his fears
And natural inconstancy.

While Choice remains he will be still unsteady,
And nothing but necessity can fix him.

Exit.

Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon and Attendants.

Artax. Methinks, my noble Father and my Friend,
We enter here like strangers, and unlookt for :
Each busie face we meet, with wonder starts,
And seems amaz'd to see us.

C

Mem.

Mem. Well may th' ignoble herd
 Start, if with heedless steps they unawares
 Tread on the Lyons walk ; a Prince's genius
 Awes with supiner greatness all beneath him.
 With wonder they behold the great *Arfaces*
 Reviv'd again in Godlike *Artaxerxes*.
 In you they see him, such as oft they did
 Returning from his Wars, and Crown'd with Conquest,
 When all our Virgins met him on the way,
 And with their Songs and Dances blest his Triumph :
 Now basely aw'd by factious Priests and Women,
 They start at Majesty, and seem surpriz'd
 As if a God had met 'em. In Honours name
 Why have we let this be ? Why have we languish'd ?
 And suffer'd such a Government as this
 To waste our strength, and wear our Empire low ?

Art. Curst be the means by which these ills arose,
 Fatal alike to me as to my Country ;
 Which my great Soul, unable to revenge,
 Has yet with indignation only seen,
 Cut off by Arts of Coward Priests and Statesmen,
 Whom I disdain'd with servile smiles to court,
 From the great right which God and Nature gave,
 My birthright to a Throne.

Mem. Nor Priests, nor Statesmen,
 Could have compleated such an ill as that,
 If Woman had not mingled in the mischief ;
 If *Artimesa* had not, by her Charms,
 And all her Sex's Cunning, wrought the King,
 Old, obvious to her arts, decay'd in greatness,
 Dead to the memory of what once he was,
 Just crawling on the verge of wretched life,
 A burthen to himself, and his friends pity ;
 Among his other failings, to forget
 All that a Father and a King could owe
 To such a Son as you were ; to cut you off
 From your Succession, from your hopes of Empire,
 And graft her upstart offspring on to Royalty.

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Artax. But if I beat it,
Oh may I live to be my Brothers Slave,
The scorn of those brave Friends that own my Cause ;
May you my Father spurn me for a Coward,
May all my noble hopes of Love and Glory
Leave me to vile despair. By heaven, my heart
Sits lighter in my bosom, when I think
That I this day shall meet the Boy my Brother,
Whose young Ambition with aspiring wings
Dares ev'n to mate my greatness.

Mem. Fame, that speaks
Minutely every circumstance of Princes,
Describes him bold, and fiercely fond of power,
Which ev'n in spite of Nature he affects.
Impatient of Command, and hardly daigning
To be controll'd by his Imperious Mother.
'Tis said too (as no means were left untry'd,
Which might prepare and fit him to contend
With a superiour right of birth and merit,)
That Books, and the politer Arts, (which those
Who know admire) have been his care ; already
He mingles in their Councils, and they trust
His youth with secrets of important villany.
The Crowd, taught by his Creatures to admire him,
Stile him a God in Wisdom.

Artax. Be that his glory,
Let him with Pedants hunt for praise in Books,
Pore out his Life amongst the lazy Gown-men,
Grow old and vainly proud in fancy'd knowledge,
Unequal to the task of vast Ambition.
Ambition ! the desire of active Souls,
That pushes 'em beyond the bounds of Nature,
And elevates the Hero to the Gods.
But see ! my Love, your beauteous Daughter comes,
And ev'n Ambition ckens at her sight.

Enter Amestris attended.

Revenge, and fierce desires of Glory, cease
To urge my passions, master'd by her eyes;
And only gentle fires now warm my breast.

Amest. I come, my Father, to attend your order. *To Memnon.*

Mem. 'Tis well; and I would have thee still be near me,
The malice of the Faction which I hate,
Would vent it self even on thy Innocence,
Wert thou not safe under a Fathers Care.

Art. Oh say a Lover's too; nor can you have
An Interest in her safety more than mine.
Love gives a Right superiour ev'n to Nature;
Or Love is Nature, in the noblest meaning,
The cause and the preserver of the world.
These arms that long to press thee to my bosome,
For ever shall defend thee.

Mem. Therefore, my Son,
Unto your Care I leave our common charge;
Tigranes with our friends expects my orders;
Those when I have dispatcht, upon the instant
I will return, and meet at your apartment. *Exit Memnon.*

Art. Come to my arms, and let me hide thee there
From all those fears that vex thy beating heart,
Be safe and free from all those fancy'd dangers,
That haunt thy Apprehension.

Ames. Can you blame me?
If from retirement drawn and pleasing solitude,
I fear to tempt this Stormy Sea the World,
Whose every Beach is strew'd with wrecks of wretches,
That daily perish in it. *Curst Ambition!*
Why dost thou come to trouble my repose,
Who have even from my Infancy disclaim'd thee?

Art. Cease to complain, my Love, and let no thought
But what brings peace and joy approach thy breast.
Let me impart my manly fires to thee,
To warm thy fancy to a taste of glory;

The Ambitious Step-mother.

13

Imperial power and Purple greatness wait thee,
And sue for thy acceptance ; by the Sun,
And by *Arfaces* Head, I will not mount
The Throne of *Cyrus*, but to share it with thee.

Ames. Vain shews of happiness ! deceitful pageantry !
Ah ! Prince, hadst thou but known the joys which dwell
With humbler fortunes, thou wouldst Curse thy Royalty.
Had fate allotted us some obscure Village,
Where only blest with life's necessities,
We might have pass'd in peace our happy days,
Free from the Cares which Crowns and Empires bring ;
There no Step-mother, no Ambitious Brother,
No wicked Statesmen, would with Impious Arts,
Have strove to wrest from us our small Inheritance,
Or stir the simple Hinds to noisie faction.
Our nights had all been blest with balmy slumbers,
And all our waking hours been crown'd with Love.

Art. Exquisite Charmer ! now by *Orosmales*
I swear, thy each soft accent melts my Soul :
The joy of Conquest, and Immortal Triumph,
Honour and Greatness, all that fires the Hero
To high Exploits, and Everlasting Fame,
Grows vile in sight of thee. My haughty Soul,
By Nature fierce, and panting after glory,
Could be content to live obscure with thee,
Forgotten and unknown of all but my *Amestris*.

Ames. No, Son of great *Arfaces*, though my Soul
Shares in my Sexes weakness, and would fly
From noise and faction, and from fatal greatness,
Yet for thy sake, thou Idol of my heart,
(Nor will I blush to own the sacred flame,
Thy sighs and vows have kindled in my breast,)
For thy lov'd sake, spight of my boding fears,
I'll meet the danger which Ambition brings,
And tread one path with thee : Nor shalt thou lose
The glorious portion which thy fate designs thee,
For thy *Amestris* fears.

Art. Give me those fears ;

For

For all things will be well.

Ames. Grant it, ye powers:

This day before your Altars will I kneel,

Where all my Vows shall for my Prince be offer'd:

Still let success attend him, Let mankind

Adore in him your visible divinity;

Nor will I importune you for my self,

But sum up all I ask in *Artaxerxes*.

Art. And doubt not but the Gods will kindly hear

Their Virgin Votary, and grant her Pray'r;

Our glorious Sun, the source of light and heat,

Whose influence cheers the world he did create,

Shall smile on thee from his Meridian Skies,

And own the kindred Beauties of thy Eyes;

Thy Eyes, which, could his own fair beams decay,

Might shine for him, and bless the world with day.

Exeunt.

A C T II.

SCENE I. *An Apartment in the Palace.*

Enter Memnon and Magas.

Mem. **T**Hose who are wise in Courts, my holy Sir,
Make friendships with the Ministers of State,
Nor seek the ruins of a wretched Exile,
Lest there should be Contagion in misfortunes,
And make the alliance fatal.

Mag. Friends like *Memnon*
Are worth being sought in danger; since this age
Of most flagitious note, degenerates
From the fam'd vertue of our Ancestors,
And leaves but few Examples of their Excellence.
Whom should we seek for friendships but those few,
Those happy few, within whose breasts alone,

The

The footsteps of lost vertue yet remain ?

Mem. I prithee peace ! for nothing misbecomes
The man that would be thought a friend, like flattery ;
Flattery ! the meanest kind of base dissembling,
And only us'd to catch the grossest fools :
Besides, it stains the honour of thy function,
Which like the Gods thou servst, should be sincere.

Mag. By that sincerity, by all the service
My friendship can expresse, I would approve it ;
And tho I went not from *Persepolis*
Companion of your exile, yet my Heart
Was with you still ; and what I could I did,
Beseeching every God for your return ;
Nor were those Vows in vain, since once again
'Tis given me to behold my friend, nay more,
Would you agree, to keep you here for ever.

Mem. The Gods, 'tis true, are just, and have, I hope,
At length decreed an end of my misfortunes ;
At least they give me this, to dye with honour,
When Life grows vile or burthensome.

Mag. By me they offer all that you can ask,
And point an easie way to happinefs.
Spare then the Wounds our wretched Country fears,
The thousand ills which Civil discord brings,
Oh still that noise of war, whose dread alarms,
Frightens repose from Country Villages,
And stirs rude tumult up and wild distraction,
In all our peaceful Cities.

Mem. Witnels for me,
Ye awful Gods, who view our inmost thoughts !
I took not arms, till urg'd by self defence,
The eldest law of Nature.
Impute not then those ills which may insue
To me, but those who with incessant hate
Pursue my life ; whose malice spreads the flame
To every part, that my devoted fabrick
May in the universal ruine burn.

Mag. And yet ev'n there perhaps you judge too rashly ;
Impetuous passion hurries you so fast,

You

You cannot mark the advantage of your fortune.

Mem. Has not the Law been urg'd to set a brand
Of foul dishonour on my hoary head ?

Ha ! am I not proscrib'd ?

Mag. Forget that thought,
That jarring grates your Soul, and turns the harmony
Of blessed peace to curst infernal discord.
Hate and its fatal causes all shall cease,
And *Memnon's* name be honour'd as of old,
The bravest and the most successful warrior,
The fortunate defender of his Country.

Mem. 'Tis true, (nor will it seem a boast to own)
I have fought well for *Persia*, and repay'd
The benefit of birth with honest service,
Full fifty years harvest in rugged Steel,
I have endur'd the biting Winters blast,
And the severer heats of parching Summer ;
While they who loll'd at home on lazy Couches,
Amidst a Crew of Harlots and soft Eunuchs,
Were at my cost secure in luxury.
This is a Justice *Mirza's* self must do me.

Mag. Even he, tho fatal accidents have set
A most unhappy bar between your friendship,
Lamenting that there had been cause of Enmity,
And owning all the merit of your virtues,
Will often wish Fate had ordain'd you friends.

Mem. Our God the Sun shall sooner change his Course,
And all the impossibilities, which Poets
Count to extravagance of loose discription,
Shall sooner be.

Mag. Yet hear me, noble *Memnon* ;
When by the duty of my Priesthood mov'd,
And in just detestation of the mischiefs
Intestine jars produce, I urg'd wise *Mirza*,
By his Concurrence, Help, and healing Counsels,
To stop those wounds at which his Country bleeds ;
Griev'd at the thought, he vow'd, his whole endeavour
Should be to close those breaches :

That

That even *Cleander's* death, and all those Quarrels
That long have nourisht hatred in your Houses,
Should be in joy of publick Peace forgotten.

Mem. Oh couldst thou charm the malice of a Statesman,
And make him quit his purpose of Revenge,
Thy preaching might reform the guilty world,
And Vice would be no more.

Mag. Nay, ev'n the Queen
Will bind the Confirmation by her Son,
And asks the fair *Amestris* for Prince *Artaban*:

Mem. Were that the only terms, it were impossible.

Mag. You would not shun th' alliance of a Prince?

Mem. No ; for it is the glory of my fate,
That *Artaxerxes* is design'd my Son,
With every Grace and Royal Vertue crown'd ;
Great, just and merciful, such as mankind,
(When, in the infant world, first governments
Began by chance) would have design'd a King.

Mag. Unbounded power, and height of greatness, give
To Kings that lustre, which we think divine ;
The wise who know 'em, know they are but men,
Nay, sometimes weak ones too ; the Crowd indeed,
Who kneel before the Image, not the God,
Worship the Deity their hands have made.
The Name of *Artaban* will be as great
As that of *Cyrus*, when he shall possess
(As sure he shall) his Throne.

Mem. Ha ! what means he !
This Villain Priest ! but hold my rage a little,
And learn dissimulation ; I'll try him farther.
You talk in Riddles, when you name a Throne
And *Artaban*, the Gods, who portion out
The Lots of Princes as of private men,
Have put a bar between his hopes and Empire.

aside

Mag. What bar ?

Mem. The best, an Elder Brothers Claim.

Mag. That's easily remov'd, the King their Father
On just and weighty reasons has decreed

D

His

His Scepter to the younger ; add to this,
The joint Concurrence of our *Persian* Lords,
Who only want your voice to make it firm.

Mem. Can I? Can they? Can any honest hand,
Join in an act like this? is not the Elder
By nature pointed out for preference?
Is not his right inroll'd amongst those Laws
Which keep the world's vast frame in beauteous order?
Ask those thou namest but now, what made them Lords?
What titles had they had, if merit only
Could have conferr'd a right? if Nature had not
Strove hard to thrust the worst deserving first,
And stamp't the Noble mark of Eldership
Upon their baser mettall?

Mag. Sure there may be
Reasons, of so much power and cogent force,
As may even set aside this right of Birth,
If Sons have rights, yet Fathers have 'em too.
'Twere an Invidious task to enter into
The Insolence, and other faults, which mov'd
Royal *Arfaces*, to a just displeasure
Against his Eldest Son Prince *Artaxerxes*.

Mem. Ha! dare not for thy life, I charge dare not
To brand the spotless virtue of my Prince,
With falshoods of most base and damn'd contrivance.
I tell thee, envious Priest; should the just Gods
Require severe account of thy past life,
And charge remembrance to dispose thy Crimes,
In rank and hideous order to thy view,
Horror and guilt of Soul would make thee mad.

Mag. You take the matter farther than I meant it;
My friendship only aims at your advantage,
Would point you out a way to Peace and Honour,
And in return of this, your rage unkindly
Loads me with Injuries.

Mem. Away! I cannot bear thy base dissembling;
My honest Soul disdains thee and thy friendship.
How hast thou dar'd to think so vilely of me;

That

That I would condescend to thy mean arts,
And traffick with thee for a Princes ruin ;
A Prince ! the Joy and Honour of Mankind,
As much superiour to the rest of Kings,
As they themselves are above common men,
And is the very Image of the Gods,
Wer't thou not priviledg'd, like age and women,
My Sword should reach thee, and revenge the wrong
Thy Tongue has done his fame.

Mag. Ungrateful Lord !

Would'st thou invade my life, as a return
For proffer'd Love ? But let th' event declare
How great a good by me sincerely offer'd,
Thy dull Romantick honour has refus'd.
And since I have discharg'd the debt I ow'd
To former friendship, if the Gods hereafter
Send Ruin down, and plague thee with Confusion,
Remember me in vain, and Curse thy folly. *Exit Magas.*

Mem. No, my remembrance treasures honest thoughts,
And holds not things like thee ; I scorn thy friendship ;
And would not owe my life to such a Villain ;
But thou art hardly Saint enough to prophecy.
Were all thy Tribe like thee, it might well startle
Our Lay unlearned faith, when thro such hands
The knowledge of the Gods is reach'd to man.
But thus those Gods instruct us, that not all
(Who like intruders thrust into their service,
And turn the Holy Office to a trade,)
Participate their sacred influence.
This then is your own Cause, ye awful powers,
Revenge your selves, your violated Altars,
That those who with unhallow'd hands approach,
May tremble at your justice. *Exit Memnon.*

SCENE II. *The Palace.*

Enter the Queen, Artaban, Mirza, Magas, and Attendants.

Artab. My Brother then is come.

Mirz. My Lord, I saw him,

D 2

With

With him old haughty *Memnon* ; as they past,
 With fierce disdain they view'd the gazing Crowd,
 And with dumb Pride seem'd to neglect that worship
 Which yet they wisht to find ; this way they move,
 'Tis said to ask an Audience of the King.

Qu. *Mirza*, 'tis well, I thank thy timely care ;
 Here will we face this storm of insolence,
 Nor fear the noisy, thunder, let it rowl,
 Then burst, and spend at once its idle rage.

Artab. Why meet we thus like wrangling Advocates,
 To urge the justice of our Cause with words?
 I hate this parle, 'tis tame ; if we must meet,
 Give me my Arms, and let us stake at once
 Our rights of Merit and of Eldership,
 And prove like Men our title.

Mirz. 'Twere unsafe,
 They come surrounded by a croud of friends,
 To strike thro these were dangerous and rash,
 Fate waits for 'em elsewhere with certain ruine ;
 From *Mirza's* hand expect it.

Qu. Be it so :
 Auspicious Sage, I trust thee with my fortune,
 My hopes of greatness, do thou guide 'em all,
 For me and for thy self. My Son give way,
 Nor let thy hasty youth disturb with outrage
 The present necessary face of peace ;
 Occasions great and glorious will remain
 Worthy thy Arms and Courage.

Artab. I obey ;
 And willingly resign th' unmanly task,
 Words are indeed your province.

Mirz. My Royal Mistress,
 Prepare to meet with more than brutal fury
 From the fierce Prince and *Memnon*.

Qu. Well I know
 The Insolence and native Pride of each,
 With scurril taunts and blackest infamy
 They load my name : But let the wretches rail,
 A woman's vengeance waits 'em.

Mirz. They are here.

Enter

The Ambitious Step-mother.

21

Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon, and Attendants.

Artax. Ye tutelar Gods, who guard this Royal fabrick,
And thou, O *Orosmades*, the Protector
Of the great *Persian* race. E're yet my Father,
Royal *Arfaces*, mingle with your Godheads,
Grant me once more to lay before his feet
His eldest-born, his once lov'd *Artaxerxes*,
To offer my Obedience to his Age ;
All that a Son can owe to such a Father.
You, who with haggard eyes stare wildly on me,
If (as by your attendance here you seem)
You serve the King my Father, lead me to him.

Qu. And dost thou wonder that mankind should start,
When Parricides and Rebels, in despight
Of Nature, Majesty, and Reverend Age,
With Impious force, and Ruffian violence,
Would rob a King and Father of his life ;
Cut off his short remains ———

Artax. Ha! sayst thou, woman ;
I prethee peace, and urge not a reply,
I would not hold acquaintance with thy Infamy.

Qu. Ye Righteous powers, whose justice awes the world,
Let not your Thunders sleep when Crimes like these
Stalk in the open air.

Artax. Thy Priest instructs thee,
Else sure thou hadst not dar'd to tempt the Gods,
And trifle with their Justice : Canst thou name it
And look on me ? on me, whom thy Curst arts
Have strove to bar from native Right to Empire,
Made me a stranger to a Fathers Love,
And broke the bands of Nature, which once held me
The nearest to his heart.

Qu. Had he not reason,
When thou with Rebel Insolence didst dare
To own and to protect that hoary Ruffian ; [*Pointing to Memnon.*
And in dispight ev'n of thy Fathers justice,
To stir the factious Rabble up to arms

For

For him; and make a murderer's cause thy own.

Mem. I had another name (nor shouldst thou move me,
Insulting Queen, to words, did not remembrance
With horror sting my Soul for *Tiribasus*,
Thy murder'd *Tiribasus*) when by my fatal orders,
And by his own high Courage urg'd, he fell,
To make thy way to guilty greatness eaze.
I thought him then a Traytor (for thy arts
Had taught the Royal Mandate so to call him)
Too big for publick Justice, and on that pretence
Consented to the snare, that catcht his life;
So my obedient honesty was made
The Pandar to thy Lust and black Ambition.
Except the guilt of that accursed day,
In all my Iron years of wars and danger,
From blooming youth down to decaying age,
My fame ne're knew a stain of foul dishonour,
And if that make me guilty, think what thou art,
The Cause and the Contriver of that mischief.

Qu. What namest thou *Tiribasus*, be his guilt
Forgotten with his memory. Think on *Cleander*,
And let the Furies that enquire for blood,
Stir horror up, and bitterest remorse,
To gnaw thy anxious Soul. Oh great *Cleande*
Unworthy was thy fate, thou first of Warriors,
To fall beneath a base Assassin's stab,
Whom all the thirsty instruments of death,
Had in the field of Battel sought in vain.

Mem. In sight of Heaven, and of the equal Gods,
I will avow that my Revenge was just;
My injur'd honour could not ask for less:
Since he refus'd to do a Souldiers Justice,
I us'd him as I ought.

Qu. Amazing boldness!
And dare'st thou call that act a Souldiers Justice?
Didst thou not meet him with dissembled Friendship,
Hiding the rancour of thy heart in smiles;
When he (whose open unsuspecting nature

Thought

Thought thee a Souldier honest as himself)
Came to the Banquet, as secure of peace,
By mutual vows renew'd ; and in the revel
Of that luxurious day, forgetting hate,
And every cause of ancient animosity,
Devoted all his thoughts to mirth and friendship ;
Then *Memnon* (at an hour when few are Villains
The sprightly juice infusing gentler thoughts,
And kindling love ev'n in the coldest breasts,)
Unequal to him in the face of War,
Stole on *Cleander* with a Cowards malice,
And struck him to the heart.

Mem. By the stern God,
By *Mars*, the Patron of my honour'd Wars,
'Tis basely false: In his own drunken brawl
The boaster fell. I bore his lavish tongue,
Nor thought him worth my Sword, till (his cold temper
Warm'd with the Wine) he dar'd me to the Combat,
Then pleas'd to meet him in that fit of Valour,
I took him at his word, and (with my Sword
Drawn against his in equal opposition)
I kill'd him while it lasted.

Artax. Cease we, my friend,
This womens war of railing, when they talk,
Men should be still, and let noise tire it self.
I came to find a Father, tho my fears
Suggest the worst of evils to my thoughts,
And make me dread to hear *Arsaces* fate.
Lead, *Memnon*, to the Presence.

Qu. Prince, you pass not;
Guards keep the door ; the King your Father lives—

Artax. Ha!— if he lives, why lives he not to me?
Why am I thus shut out and banisht from him?
Why are my veins rich with his Royal blood?
Why did he give me Life if not to serve him?
Forbid me not to wait upon his Bed,
And watch his sickly slumbers, that my youth
May with its service glad his drooping age,

And.

And his cold hand may bless me e're he dye:
Nay, be a Queen, and rob me of his Crown,
But let me keep my right to filial piety.

Qu. Well hast thou urg'd the specious name of Duty
To hide deform'd Rebellion; Hast thou not
With thy false arts poyson'd his peoples Loyalty?
What meant thy pompous progress thro the Empire?
Thy vast profusion to the factious Nobles,
Whose interest sways the Croud, and stirs up Mutiny?
Why did thy haughty, fierce, disdainful Soul
Stoop to the meanest arts which catch the vulgar?
Herd with 'em, fawn upon 'em, and caress 'em;
Appeal to them, to them relate thy wrongs,
And make them Judges of thy Fathers Justice?
Thy cruel and unnatural lust of power
Have sunk thy Father more than all his years,
And made him wither in a green old age.

Artax. False all as hell; Nor had I arm'd my friends
But to defend that right.

Qu. Dost thou not come,
Impatient of delay to hasten fate?
To bring that death, the lingering disease
Would only for a day or two defer.

Artax. I hear thee, and disdain thy little malice,
That dares to stain my virtue with a Crime;
It views with most abhorrence; but reproach
Is lost on thee, since Modesty with all
The Vertues that adorn thy Sex is fled.

Qu. Audacious Rebel!

Artax. Infamous Adulteress!
Stain of my Fathers Bed, and of his Throne

Artab. Villain! thou ly'st! oh Madam give me way;

To the Queen, who holds him, drawing his Sword.

Whatever bars my fury calls me base,
Unworthy of the honor of your Son.

Qu. Hold Artaban! my honour suffers not
From his lewd breath, nor shall thy Sword profane
With brawls or blood the reverence of this place,

To

To peace and sacred Majesty devoted.

Artax. Ha! who art thou?

To Artaban.

Artab. The son of great *Arfaces*,

Artax. No! 'tis false! thy forging mother's damn'd contrivance.
Seek for thy Father in that plotting fellow,

The Hero's race disclaims thee. Why dost thou frown,

And knit thy boyish brow? Dost thou dare ought

Worthy the rank of the Divine *Arfacides*?

If so, come forth, break from that woman's arms,

And meet me with thy good Sword like a man.

Artab. Yes! *Artaxerxes*, yes! thou shalt be met:

The mighty Gods have held us in the balance,

And one of us is doom'd to sink for ever.

Nor can I bear a long delay of Fate,

But wish the great decision were ev'n now.

Proud and ambitious Prince, I dare like thee,

All that is great and glorious. Like thine,

Immortal thirst of Empire fires my soul,

My soul, which of superiour power impatient,

Disdains thy Eldership; therefore in Arms

Which give the noblest right to Kings) I will

To death dispute with thee the Throne of *Cyrus*.

Artax. Do this, and thou art worthy of my anger:

O energy divine of great Ambition,

That can inform the souls of beardless Boys,

And ripen 'em to Men in spite of Nature.

I tell thee, Boy, that Empire is a Cause,

For which the Gods might wage Immortal War.

Then let my soul exert her utmost virtue,

And think at least thou art *Arfaces* Son,

That the Idea of thy fancy'd Father

May raise and animate thy lesser Genius,

And make thee fit to meet my arm in Battle.

Artab. Oh doubt not, but my soul is charmd with greatness,

So much it rivals even the joy of Knowledge

And Sacred Wisdom. What makes Gods divine,

But Power and Science infinite?

Hear only this; our Father, prebly age,

When

E

And

And a long train of Evils which that brings,
 Languishes in the last Extremes of life :
 Since thou wouldst blot my birth with base dishonour,
 Be this my proof of filial piety,
 While yet he lives cease we our enmity ;
 Nor let the hideous noise of War disturb
 His parting Soul.

Artax. I take thee at thy word :
 Let his remains of life be Peace betwixt us,
 And after that let all our time be War.
 Remember when we meet, since one must fall,
 Who Conquers and Survives, Survives to Empire. *Exeunt*
severally, Queen and Artaban, Artaxerxes, Memn. cum suis.
Manent Mirza and Magas.

Mirz. Most fortunate Event ! which gives us more
 Than even our wishes could have askt. This Truce
 Gives lucky opportunity for thinking ;
 'Twill lull these thoughtless Heroes to security.

Mag. Th' approaching Festival will more confirm it :
 Of all those sacred times which heretofore
 Religion has distinguisht from the rest,
 And to the service of the Gods devoted,
 This has been still most venerable held ;
 Among the vulgar, toil and labour ceases
 With Chaplets crown'd, they dance to the shrill Pipe,
 And in their Songs invoke those milder Deities,
 That soften anxious life with peace and pleasure ;
 Slaves are enfranchis'd, and inveterate foes
 Forget, or at the least suspend their hate,
 And meet like friends. Pernicious discord seems
 Out rooted from our more than Iron age :
 The Gods are worshipt with unusual Reverence,
 Since none, not ev'n our Kings, approach their Temples
 With any mark of Wars destructive Rage,
 But Sacrifice unarm'd.

Mirz. A lucky thought
 Is in my mind at once compleatly form'd,
 Like Grecian Pallas in the head of Jove.

When

When *Memnon*, *Artaxerxes*, and their friends,
Shall, in obedience to the Holy Rites,
To-morrow at the Altar bow unarm'd,
Orchanes with a party of the Guards,
Who in my Palace shall this night be plac'd,
May at that private door which opens into
The Temple; rush at once, and seize 'em all.
The heads once safe, the mean and heartless Crowd
With ease may be dispers'd.

Mag. What you propose
Wears a successful face, were it as innocent :
An act of such outrageous prophanation,
May shock the thoughts ev'n of our closest friends,
And make 'em start from an abhorr'd alliance,
That draws the vengeance of the Gods upon 'em.

Mirz. Art thou the first to start a doubt like that ?
Art thou (who dost inspire their Oracles,
And teach 'em to deceive the easie Crowd
In doubtful phrase) afraid of thy own Gods ?
In every change they were on thy side still,
And sure they will not leave thee now for trifles.
The Gods shall certainly befriend our Cause,
At least not be our foes, nor will they leave
Their happy seats (where free from care and pain,
Blest in themselves alone, of man regardless,
They loll serene in Everlasting Ease)
To mind the trivial business of our world:

Mag. But more I fear the Superstitious Vulgar,
Who tho' unknowing what Religion means,
Yet nothing moves 'em more than zealous rage
For its defence, when they believe it violated.

Mirz. I was to blame to tax the Priest with scruples,
Or think his care of Interest was his Conscience. [*Aside.*
My Caution shall obviate all thy fears;
We will give out that they themselves design'd
To fire the Temple, and then kill the King.
No matter tho' it seem not very probable,
More monstrous tales have oft amus'd the vulgar.

Mag. I yield to your direction, and to strengthen
The Enterprize, will secretly dispose
A party of my own within the Temple,
To joyn with yours.

Mirz. It joys my heart to think
That I shall glut my vengeance on this Memnon :
That I shall see him strive in vain, and Curse
The happy fraud that caught him. Like a Lyon,
Who long has reign'd the terror of the Woods,
And dar'd the boldest Huntsmen to the Combat ;
Till catcht at length within some hidden snare,
With foaming Jaws he bites the Toils that hold him,
And roars and rowls his fiery eyes in vain ;
While the surrounding Swains at pleasure wound him,
And make his death their sport.
Thus Wit still gets the mastery o're Courage.
Long time unmatcht in War the Hero shone,
And mighty Fame in fields of Battel won ;
Till one fine project of the Statesman's Brain
Bereaves him of the spoils his Arms did gain,
And renders all his boasted prowess vain. } *Exeunt.*

A C T III.

SCENE I. A Garden belonging to Mirza's Palace.

Cleone is discover'd lying on a bank of Flowers, attending.

SONG, by B. Stote, Esq.

UPon a shady Bank repos'd,
Philanthe, amorous, young, and fair,

Sighing to the Groves, disclos'd

The story of her Care!

The Vocal Groves give some relief,

While they her notes return,

The Waters murmur o're her grief,

And Eccho seems to mourn.

The Ambitious Step-mother.

29

*A Swain that heard the Nymph complain,
In pity of the fair,
Thus kindly strove to Cure her pain,
And Ease her mind of Care.*

*Tis just that Love should give you rest,
From Love your Torments came ;
Take that warm Cordial to your breast,
And meet a kinder flame.*

*How wretched must the woman prove,
Beware, fair Nymph, beware,
Whose folly scorns anothers Love,
And Courts her own Despair.*

Cleo. Oh Love ! thou bane of an unhappy Maid !
Still art thou busie at my panting heart ?
Still dost thou melt my Soul with thy soft Images,
And make my ruine pleasing ? fondly I try
By gales of Sighs and Floods of streaming Tears,
To vent my sorrows, and assuage my passions.
Still fresh supplies renew th' exhausted stores.
Love reigns my Tyrant, to himself alone
He vindicates the Empire of my breast,
And banishes all thoughts of joy for ever.

Bel. Why are you still thus Cruel to yourself ?
Why do you feed and cherish the disease,
That preys on your dear life ? how can you hope
To find a Cure for Love in solitude ?
Why rather chuse you not to shine at Court ?
And in a thousand gay diversions there,
To lose the memory of this wretched passion ?

Cleo. Alas ! *Beliza*, thou hast never known
The fatal power of a resistless Love ;
Like that avenging guilt that haunts the Impious,
In vain we hope by flying to avoid it,
In Courts and Temples it pursues us still,
And in the loudest clamours will be heard :
It grows a part of us, lives in our blood,
And every beating pulse proclaims its force.

Oh !

Oh! think not then that I can shun my self;
The Grave can only hide me from my sorrows.

Bel. Allow me then at least to share your griefs,
Companions in misfortunes make 'em less;
And I could suffer much to make you easie.

Cleo. Sit by me, gentle Maid, and while I tell
A wretched tale of unregarded Love,
If thou in kind compassion of my woes,
Shalt sigh or shed a tear for my mishap,
My grateful eyes shall pay it back with interest.
Help me to rail at my too easie heart,
That rashly entertain'd this fatal guest:
And you, my eyes! why were you still impatient
Of any other sight but *Artaxerxes*?

Why did you make my womans heart acquainted
With all the thousand graces and perfections,
That dress the lovely Hero up for Conquest?

Bel. Had you oppos'd this passion in its infancy,
E're time had given it strength, it might have dy'd.

Cleo. That was the fatal Error that undid me:
My Virgin thoughts, and unexperienc'd Innocence,
Found not the danger till it was too late.

And tho when first I saw the charming Prince,
I felt a pleasing motion at my heart,
Short breathing sighs heav'd in my panting breast,
The mounting blood flush'd in my glowing face,
And dy'd my cheeks with more than usual blushes,
I thought him sure the wonder of his kind,
And wisht my fate had given me such a Brother:
Yet knew not that I lov'd, but thought that all
Like me, beheld and blest him for his Excellence.

Bel. Sure never hopeless Maid was curst before
With such a wretched passion; all the Gods
Join to oppose your happiness; 'tis said
This day the Prince shall wed the fair *Amestris*.

Cleo. No, my *Beliza*, I have never known
The pleasing thoughts of hope: certain despair
Was born at once, and with my love increas'd.

Bel.

Bel. Think you the Prince has e're perceiv'd your thoughts ?

Cleo. Forbid it all ye chaster powers, that favour

The modesty and Innocence of Maids :

No, till my death no other breast but thine

Shall e're participate the fatal secret :

O could I think that he had ever known

My hidden flame, shame and confusion

Would force my Virgin soul to leave her mansion,

And certain Death ensue.

Thou name'st the fair *Amestris*, didst thou not ?

Bel. Madam, I did.

Cleo. I envy not her happiness ;

Tho sure few of our Sex are blest like her.

In such a Godlike Lord.

Would I had been a man !

With honour then I might have sought his friendship !

Perhaps from long experience of my faith,

He might have lov'd me better than the rest.

Amidst the dangers of the horrid War,

Still had I been the nearest to his side ;

In Courts and Triumphs still had shar'd his joys,

Or when the sportful Chace had call'd us forth,

Together had we cheer'd our foaming Steeds,

Together prest the Savage o're the plain.

And when o're-labour'd with the pleasing toil,

Stretcht on the verdant soil had slept together.

But whither does my roving fancy wander ?

These are the sick dreams of fantastick love.

So in a Calenture, the Sea-man fancies

Green Fields and Flowry Meadows on the Ocean,

Till leaping in, the wretch is lost for ever.

Bel. Try but the Common Remedies of Love,

And let a second flame expel the first.

Cleo. Impossible ; as well thou mayst imagine,

When thou complainst of heat at scorching noon,

Another Sun shall rise to shine more kindly,

Believe me, my *Beliza*, I am grown

So fond of the delusion that has charm'd me,

I hate the officious hand that offers cure.

Bel.

Bel. Madam, Prince *Artaban*.

Cleo. My cruel Stars.

Do ye then envy me my very solitude;
But death, the wretches only remedy,
Shall hide me from your hated Light for ever.

Enter Artaban.

Artab. Ah! Lovely Mourner, still! still wilt thou blast
My eager Love with un auspicious Tears?
When at thy Feet I kneel, and sue for pity,
Or justly of thy cold regards complain,
Still wilt thou only answer me with sighs?

Cleo. Alas! my Lord, what answer can I give?
If still I entertain you with my grief,
Pity the temper of a wretched Maid,
By nature sad, and born the child of sorrow.
In vain you ask for happiness from me,
Who want it for my self.

Art. Can blooming Youth,
And Virgin Innocence, that knows not guilt,
Know any cause for grief?

Cleo. Do but survey
The miserable state of humane kind,
Where wretches are the general Encrease,
And tell me if there be not cause for grief.

Art. Such thoughts as these, my fair Philosopher,
Inhabit wrinkled cheeks, and hollow eyes;
The marks which years set on the wither'd Sage;
The gentle Goddess Nature wisely has
Allotted other cares for youth and beauty.
The God of Love stands ready with his Torch
To light it at thy eyes, but still in vain,
For ere the flame can catch, 'tis drown'd in tears.

Cleo. Oh! name not Love, the worst of all misfortunes,
The common ruin of my easie Sex,
Which I have sworn for ever to avoid,
In memory of all those hapless Maids,
That Love has plung'd in unexampled woes.

Artab. Forbear to argue, with that Angel face,

Against

Against the passion thou wert form'd to raise.
Alas! thy frozen heart has only known
Love in Reverse, not tasted of its joys;
The wishes, soft desires, and pleasing pains,
That centre all in most extatick bliss.
Oh, lovely Maid, mis-spend no more that treasure
Of Youth and Charms, which lavish Nature gives;
The *Paphian* Goddess frowns at thy delay;
By her fair self and by her Son she swears,
Thy Beauties are devoted to her service.
Now! now she shoots her fires into my breast,
She urges my desires, and bids me seize thee, [*Taking her hand,*
And bear thee as a Victim to her Altar, *and kissing it.*
Then offer up ten thousand thousand joys,
As an amends for all thy former coldness.

Cleo. Forbear, my Lord; or I must swear to fly
For ever from your sight.

Artab. Why dost thou frown?
And damp the rising joy within my breast?
Art thou resolv'd to force thy gentle nature,
Compassionate to all the World beside,
And only to me cruel? Shall my vows,
Thy Fathers intercession all be vain?

Cleo. Why do you urge my Fathers fatal power,
To Curse you with a sad unlucky Bride?
Cast round your eyes on our gay Eastern Courts,
Where smiling Beauties, born to better fates,
Give joy to the beholders.
There bleesome happy Princess with your vows,
And leave the poor *Cleone* to her sorrows.

Artab. What Queens are those, of most celestial form,
Whose Charms can drive thy Image from my heart?
Oh were they cast in Natures fairest mold,
Brighter than *Cynthia's* shining train of Stars,
Kind as the softest she that ever clapt
Her Lover, when the Bridal night was past;
I swear I would prefer thee, O *Cleone*
With all thy scorn and cold indifference,
Would choose to languish and to dye for thee,

Much rather than be blest, and live for them.

Cleo. Oh Prince, it is too much; nor am I worthy
The honour of your passion, since 'tis fixt
By certain and unalterable fate,
That I can never yield you a return:
My thoughts are all to chaste *Diana* vow'd,
And I have sworn to die her Virgin Votary.

Artab. Impossible! thou canst not give away
Mine and thy Fathers right, ev'n to the Gods;
Diana will disown the unjust donation,
Nor favour such an injury to Love.
To every power divine I will appeal,
Nor shall thy Beauty bribe 'em to be partial:
Their Altars now expect us; Come, fair Saint,
And if thou wilt abide their righteous doom,
Their Justice must decree my happiness,
Reward my sufferings, and my flame approve,
For they themselves have felt the pow'r of Love.

Exeunt.

SCENE II. *The Temple of the Sun.*

Enter Artaxerxes, Amestris, and Attendants.

Artax. 'Tis done! 'Tis done! oh let me find some way
To tell the mighty joy that fills my breast,
Lest I grow mad with height of furious blifs.
The holy Priest has ty'd the sacred knot,
And my *Amestris* now is all my own.
Oh thou soft Charmer! thou excelling Sweetness!
Why art thou not transported all like me:
I swear thou dost not love thy *Artaxerxes*,
If thou art calm in this excess of happiness.

Amest. Alas! my Lord! my panting heart yet trembles
In vast suspence between unruly joys
And chilling fears; somewhat methinks there is
That checks my soul, and says I was too bold
To quit the pleasures of my Virgin state,
To barter 'em for cares and anxious love.

Artax. These are the fears which wait on every Bride,

And

And only serve for preludes to her joys ;
Short sighs, and all those motions of thy heart,
Are Nature's call, and kindle warm desires ;
Soon as the friendly Goddess of the night,
Shall draw her vail of darkness o're thy blushes,
These little cold unnecessary doubts,
Shall fly the circle of my folding arms :
And when I press thee trembling to my bosom,
Thou shalt confess (if there be room for words,
Or ev'n for thoughts) that all those thoughts are bliss.

Amest. Yet surely mine are more than common fears ;
For oh ! my Prince, when my foreboding heart
Surveys the uncertain state of humane joys,
How secretly the malice of our fate
Unseen pursues, and often blasts our happiness
In full security ; I justly dread,
Lest death or parting, or some unseen accident,
Much worse, if possible, than each of these,
Should curse us more than ever we were blest.

Artax. Doubt not the Gods, my Fair ! whose righteous power
Shall favour and protect our vertuous Loves.
If still thou apprehendst approaching danger,
Let us make haste, and snatch th' uncertain joy,
While fate is in our power.

Now let us start, and give a loose to Love,
Feast ev'ry sense with most luxurious pleasure,
Improve our minutes, make 'em more than years,
Than ages, and ev'n live the life of Gods :
If after this, death or ill fortune comes,
It cannot injure us, since we already
Have liv'd, and been before-hand with our fate.

Amest. Oh let me ease at once my tender heart,
And tell my dearest Lord my worst of fears :
There is an ill which more than death I dread ;
Should you, by time and long fruition sated,
Grow faithless, and forget the lost *Amestris* ;
Forget that Everlasting truth you vow'd,
How sure I should not publicly complain

Nor to the Gods accuse my perjur'd Prince,
 Yet my soft soul would sink beneath the weight.
 I should grow mad, and curse my very being,
 And wish I ne're had been, or not been lov'd.

Artax. Dost thou?—when every happier Star shines for us,
 And with propitious Influence gilds our fortune,
 Dost thou invent fantastick forms of danger,
 And fright thy soul with things that are Impossible?
 Now by the Potent God of Love, I swear
 I will have ample vengeance for thy doubts.
 My soft complaining Fair, shalt thou not pay me
 In Joys too fierce for thought, for these suspicions.
 The bands which hold our Love are knit by fate,
 Nor shall decaying time or nature loose 'em.
 Beyond the limits of the silent Grave,
 Love shall survive, immortal as our beings,
 And when at once we climb yon azure Skies,
 We will be shown to all the blest above,
 For the most constant pair that e're deserv'd
 To mingle with their Stars.

Amest. 'Tis true! 'tis true!
 Nor ought I to suspect thee, O my Hero!
 The Gods have form'd thee for the nearest pattern
 Of their own excellence and perfect truth.
 Oh let me sink upon thy gentle bosome,
 And blushing tell how greatly I am blest.
 Forgive me Modesty, if here I vow
 That all the pleasures of my Virgin state
 Were poor and trifling to the present rapture.
 A gentle warmth invades my glowing breast,
 And while I fondly gaze upon thy face,
 Ev'n thought is lost in exquisite delight.

Artax. Oh thou delicious perfect Angel Woman!
 Thou art too much for mortal sence to bear:
 The Vernal bloom and fragrancy of Spices
 Wafted by gentle winds, are not like thee.
 From thee, as from the *Cyprian* Queen of Love,
 Ambrosial odours flow, my every faculty

Is charm'd by thee, and drinks Immortal pleasure.
Oh glorious God of day fly swiftly forward,
And to thy Sisters rule resign the world :
Nor haste to rise again, but let the night
Long bless me with her stay ; that thy return
At morn may find me happiest of my kind.

Enter Memnon.

My Father ! is there an Increase of joy ?
What can ye give, ye Gods, to make it more ?

Mem. Ye Blessings of my age : whom when I view,
The memory of former woes is lost.

Oh Prince ! well has this glorious day repay'd
My youth and blood spent in *Arfaces* service.
Nor had the Gods indulg'd my vainest wishes,
Durst I have askt for such a Son as you are.
But I am roughly bred, in words unknowing,
Nor can I phrase my speech in apt expression,
To tell how much I love and honour you.
Might I but live to fight one Battel for you,
Tho with my Life I bought the Victory,
Tho my old batter'd trunk were hew'd to pieces,
And scatter'd o're the field, yet should I bless
My fate, and think my years wound up with honour.

Artax. Doubt not, my noble Father, but even yet
A large remain of Glory is behind.

When Civil-discord shall be reconcil'd,
And all the noise of Faction hush'd to Peace,
Rough *Greece*, alike in Arts and Arms severe,
No more shall brand the *Persian* name with softness.

Athens and *Sparta* wondring shall behold us,
Strict in our discipline, undaunted, patient
Of Wars stern toil, and dread our hostile virtue:

Those stubborn Commonwealths, that proudly dare
Disdain the glorious Monarchs of the East,
Shall pay their homage to the Throne of *Cyrrus*.

And when with Lawrels cover'd we return,
My Love shall meet, and smiling bless our triumph,

While

While at her feet I lay the Scepters of the world,

Mem. Oh glorious theme! by heaven it fires my age,
And kindles youth again in my cold veins.

Artax. Ha! *Mirza* and the Queen! retire my fair,
Ungentle hate and brawling rage shall not
Disturb the peace, to which this happy day
Is doubly sacred. Forward, to the Altar.

*Exeunt Artax-
erxes, Amestris, Memnon, and Attendants.*

Enter at the other door, Queen, Mirza, and Attendants.

Mirz. All are dispos'd, and fate but waits our orders
For a deciding blow.

Qu. Your Caution was
Both wise and faithful, not to trust my Son
Too rashly with a secret of this nature.
The youth, tho great of soul, and fond of glory,
Yet leans to the fantastick rules of Honour,
Would hesitate at such an act as this,
Tho future Empire should depend upon it.

Mirz. When time shall add experience to that knowledge,
With which his early youth is richly fraught,
He'll be convinc'd that only Fools would lose
A Crown for notional Principles.
Honour is the unthinking Souldier's boast,
Whose dull head cannot reach those finer arts,
By which Mankind is govern'd.

Qu. And yet it gives a lustre to the Great,
And Makes the Croud adore em.

Mir. Your Son shall reap
The whole advantage, while we bear the guilt:
You, Madam, when the sacred Hymns are finish'd,
Must with the Prince retire; our foes when seiz'd,
Within the Temple may be best secur'd,
Till you dispose their fate.

Qu. The Rites attend us, *Solemn Music.*
This day my Son is Monarch of the East.

Mirz. Lend us, ye Gods, your Temples but this day,

You

You shall be paid with Ages of devotion,
And after this for ever undisturb'd,
Brood o're your smoaking Altars.

Exeunt Queen, Mirza, and Attendants.

SCENE II.

The Scene opening shews the Altar of the Sun, Magas and several other Priests attending. Solemn Musick is heard; then Enter on one side Memmon, Artaxerxes, Amestris, and Attendants, on the other side the Queen, Mirza, Artaban, Cleone, Cleanthes, and Attendants; they all bow towards the Altar, and then range themselves on each side of the Stage, while the following Hymn is perform'd in Parts, and Chorus by the Priests.

H Y M N to the Sun, by W. Shippen. Esq;

Hail Light, that doubly glads our sphere;
Glory and Triumph of the year!
Hail Festival for ever blest,
By the adoring ravisht East!

Hail Mithras, mighty Deity!
For Fire and Air, and Earth and Sea,
From thee their origin derive,
Motion and Form from thee receive.

When Matter yet unact'd lay,
No sooner thou infus'd thy ray,
But the dull mass its pow'r obey'd,
But an harmonious World was made.

Which still, when thou withdrawst thy beams,
An undistinguisht Chaos seems;
For what are objects without sight?
Or vision when involv'd in night?

Night

*Night is an universal Grave,
Where things but doubtful beings have,
Till them thy beams illuminate,
And as it were again create.*

Chorus, &c.

*Hail source of immaterial fire,
That ne're begun, can ne're expire,
Whose Orb, with streaming Glories fraught,
Dazles the ken of human thought!*

*All the dependant Spheres above,
By thy direction shine and move.
All purer beings here below,
From thy immediate Essence flow.*

*What is the Soul of man but light,
Drawn down from thy transcendent height?
What but an Intellectual beam?
A spark of thy immortal flame?*

*For as thou rulest with gladsome rays
The greater world, so this the less,
And like thy own diffusive Soul,
Shoots life and vigour thro the whole.*

*Since then from thee at first it came,
To thee, tho clogg'd, it points its flame,
And conscious of superiour birth,
Despises this unkindred Earth.*

Chorus, &c.

*Hail Orosmales, Pow'r Divine!
Permits us to approach thy shrine,
Permit thy Votaries to raise
Their grateful voices to thy praise.*

Thou

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

41

*Thou art the Father of our Kings,
The stem whence their high lineage springs,
The Sov'reign Lord that does maintain
Their uncontroul'd and boundless Reign.*

*O then assist thy drooping Son,
Who long has grac't our Persian Throne!
O may he yet extend his sway!
We yet Arsaces Rule obey!*

*Let thy vitality impart
New Spirits to his fainting Heart;
Let him like thee (from whom he sprung)
Be ever Active, ever Young.*
Chorus, &c.

When the Musick is ended Memnon, Artaxerxes, &c. Queen, Artaban, &c. go off as they Enter'd, severally: only Mirza comes forward and the Scene shuts; he looks after Amestris going out, and then speaks.

Mirz. What means this foreign warmth within my Breast?
Is this a time for any thought but Vengeance?
That fatal Beauty dazzles my weak Sense,
And blasts the resolution of my Soul:
My Eyes in contradiction to my purpose,
Still bent to her, and drunk the Poyson in;
While I stood stupid in suspense of thought.
And now like Oyl my flaming Spirits blaze,
My Arteries, my Heart, my Brain is scorch't,
And I am all one fury. Feeble *Mirza*!
Can'st thou give way to dotage, and become
The jest of Fools? No! 'tis Impossible:
Revenge shall rouse, and with her Iron whips
Lash forth this lazy Ague from my Blood,
This Malady of Girls. Remember Statesman,
Thy Fate and future Fortunes now are forming,
And Summon all thy Counsels to their Aid;

G

Ev'n

Ev'n thy whole Soul. It wo't be; *Amestris*
 Still rises uppermost in all my thoughts,
 The Master-piece of Nature. The Boy God
 Laughs at my Rage, and triumphs o're my Folly.
 Ha! by the Gods 'tis doing! Now my Stars
 Be kind and make me Master of my wish at once. } *A tumultuous noise is heard.*

Enter Magas.

But see the Priest! Why dost thou stare and tremble,
 Have we succeeded, say; and ease my Fears.

Mag. My Soul is pierc'd with Horror! Every God
 Seems from his shrine to threaten us with Vengeance.
 The Temple reels and all its pond'rous Roof
 Nods at the Prophanation.

Mirz. Base and fearful!
 How can thy wretched Soul conceive such Monsters?
 Can't thou who would'st be great be Superstitious?
 But 'tis the Cowards Vice. Say; are our Enemies secur'd?

Mag. They are; the Prince, Old *Memnon* and his Daughter
 Are in *Orchanes* hands, only *Tigranes*
 With some of Lesser note are fled.

Mirz. No matter:
 These are the Soul, the rest a lifeless Mass,
 Not worth our Apprehension.

Mag. Will you stay,
 To meet the furious Thunder of their Rage?

Mirz. I will; thou may'st retire and summon back.
 Thy scatter'd Spirits; Let not the Crowd see
 Thy Fears, 'twill make the Vile and Cheap among 'em

Exit Magas.

*Enter Artaxerxes, Memnon and Amestris Prisoners, Orchanes
 and Guards.*

Artax. Slave! Villain! Answer, say how hast thou dar'd
 To do this Insolence?—

Orch. I know my orders

Which

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

43

Which from the Queen my Mistress I receiv'd,
Who will avow her own Authority.

Artax. Ha! from the Queen! She durst not! 'tis Impossible!
'Tis Sacrilege! 'tis Treason! 'tis Damnation.

Am I not *Artaxerxes*? Born to Empire,
The next degree to God's. Oh thou bright Sun!
That roul'st above the Object of our Worship.
Can'st thou behold and not avenge thy Race?
Thy injur'd Race? If I could ought admit
Unworthy of thy great Original.

Let me be doom'd to fall this Villain's Slave,
If not!—Why am I made the scorn of Wretches?
So much below me that they hardly share
The Common priviledge of Kind; but are
As Beasts to Men. ———

Mem. See where the Master Villain stands! unmov'd
And harden'd in Impiety, he laughs
At the fictitious Justice of the God's,
And thinks their Thunder has not Wings to reach him;
but know the Joy thy Triumph brings is short,
My Fate (if the God's govern) or 'at least
My Mind's beyond thy reach, and scorns thy Malice.

Mirz. Dull valiant Fool thy Ruin is the least
The most ignoble Triumph of my Wit.

Cleander's Blood asks for substantial Vengeance,
And when the thought that labours in my Breast
Appears in Action, thou shalt know the cause
Why I remain to view thy hated Face,
That blasts me with its Presence; thou shalt know it
And Curse thy self, Curse the ill-omen'd day
That gave the Birth, renouncing all the God's,
Thy self of them renounc'd, shal't sink to Hell
In bitterest Pangs and mingle with the furies.

Mem. Unhallow'd Dog, thou ly'st! The utmost force
Of all thy study'd Malice cannot move me
To any act that misbecomes my Courage,
And if the God's in tryal of my Virtue
Can yield my Life up to thy Hangman's Mercy;

Ile shew thee with what ease the Brave and Honest
Can put off Life till thou shalt damn thy Arts,
Thy wretched Arts, and Impotence of Malice.

Mirz. Rest well assur'd, thou shalt have cause to try
The Philosophick force of Passive Vertue.

Artax. Oh death to Greatness! Can we fall so low
To be the slavish Objects of his Mirth?
Shall my just Rage and violated Honour
Play the Buffoon and Minister to laughter?
Down, down my swelling Heart, hide thy Resentments,
Nor prostitute the ruffled Majesty
Of injur'd Princes to the gazing Crow'd,
My Face shall learn to cover the Emotion
My wounded Soul endures. Ha! my *Amestris*!
My Love! my Royal Bride! the spoiler Grief
Defaces every Feature, like the Deluge
That ras't the Beauties of the first Creation;
I cannot bear it! Villains give me way!

} *He breaks from the Guards that hold him*
} *and catches hold of Amestris.*

Oh let me hold thee in my throbbing Bosom,
And strive to hide thy Sorrows from my sight,
I cannot see thy Griefs; and yet I want
The power to bring Relief.

Ames. Ah! no my Prince!
There are no remedies for Ills like ours;
My helpless Sex by nature stands expos'd
To all the Wrongs and Injuries of Fortune,
Defenceless in my self, you were my refuge,
You are my Lord, to whom should I Complain,
Since you cannot redress me: were you not
The Honour, Joy, and Safety of *Amestris*?
For you alone I liv'd, with you alone
I could be happy, oh my *Artaxerxes*!
One influence guides our Consenting Stars,
And still together are we Blest or Curst.

Mirz.

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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Mirz. With a malignant Joy my Ears drink in,
Hear each Harmonious accent every glance,
Goes to my Heart and stirs, alternate Motions
Of Heat and Cold, a lazy pleasure now
Thrills all my Veins, anon Desire grows hot,
And my old Sinews shrink before the Flame.

Aside.

Artax. Go on! And Charm me with thy Angels Voice,
Sooth and assuage the Fury in my Breast,
That urges me to unbecoming Passion,
My Rage grows cool amidst thy soft Complainings,
And though thou talk'st of Woes, of Death and Ruin,
'Tis Heaven to hear thee.

Ames. Since this is all our wretched Consolation,
Let us indulge our Grief, 'till by long use,
It grows Habitual, and we lose the pain.
Here, on the Marble Pavement will we sit,
Thy Head upon my Breast; and if remembrance
Of Cruel Wrongs, shall vex thy noble Heart,
The Murmur of my Sighs shall Charm the Tumult,
And Fate shall find us Calm; nor will the Gods,
Who here inhabit and behold our Sufferings,
Delay to end our Woes in Immortality.

Artax. Ha! say'st thou? God's! Yes certain there are God's,
To whom my Youth with Reverence still has bow'd,
Whose Care and Providence are Virtues Guard,
Think then my fair they have not made us great,
And like themselves for miserable ends.

Mirz. God's might behold her and forget their Wisdom, [*Aside.*
But I delay too long! *Orchanes* lend thy Ear.

Mem. My Children! you were still my Joy and Hap-
Why am I made your Curse? this hated Head [pines. *Exit.*
To death devoted, has involv'd your Innocence
In my Destruction.

[*Guards lay hold on Artaxerxes*

Ames. Alas, my Father! ——— (*and Amestris.*

Artax. Barbarous Dogs! what mean you?

Orch. Convey the Lady to Lord *Mirza's* Palace,
'Tis the Queen's will she shall be there confin'd.

Artax. Thou can'st not mean so damn'd a Villany!

Thou:

him

Mirz

Thou dar'st not! shal't not part us! Fate cannot do it!

Mem. Curfed Old Age, why have I liv'd to fee this?

Orch. Force 'em afunder.

Artax. Hew off my Limbs ye Dogs! I will not lofe 'em—
Oh Devils! Death and Furies! my Wife! my lov'd *Amestris*!—

Ames. My Lord! my Husband!—

Orchanes and one party of the Guards force Artaxerxes and Memnon off one way, and the other party bears Amestris another.

Re-enter Mirza.

Mirz. This was moft noble Mifchief! it ftung home,
'Twas Luxury of Vengeance!—'twas not ill
To keep aloof; thefe boiftorous Beasts have Paws,
And might have scratch't: The Wife fhould not allow
A poffibility to Fortunes Malice.

Now to the reft; this Prince! this Husband! dies:

To Morrows dawn brings his and *Memnon's* Fate.

This Night let 'em difpair, and Bann, and Rage,

And to the wooden Deities within,

Tell frantick Tales; my Hours fhall pafs more pleafingly;

If Love, (which yet I know not,) can give Pleafure.

Love! What is Love? the Paffion of a Boy,

That fpend his time in Lazinefs and Sonnets:

Luft is the Appetite of Man; and fhall

Be fated, till it loath the cloying Banquet.

The Wife are by Human frailty,

To tafte thefe Pleafures, but not dwell upon 'em;

They marr and dull the faculty of thinking;

One Night I fafely may indulge in Riot,

'Tis Politick lewdnefs, and Affifts my Vengeance;

I will grow Young, and furfeit on her Charms,

Her lufcious Sweets; then rifing from her Arms,

The naufeous, momentary Joy forget,

And be my felf again; again be Wife and Great.

Exit Mirza.

End of the 3d Act.

ACT

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Palace.*

Enter Artaban and Cleanthes.

Ar. 'TIS Base and Impious! where are the Ties
shall keep Mankind in Order? if Religion
And publick Faith be Violated; 'Tis an Injury
That beards both Gods and Men; and dares their Justice.

Clea. The fearful Crowd already take the Alarm,
Break off their Solemn Sports, their Songs and Dances,
And wildly in tumultuous Consort joyn;
Mischief and Danger sits in every Face,
And while they dread the Anger of the Gods,
The Wise who know th' Effects of Popular Fury,
From them expect that Vengeance which they Fear.

Artab. The Sacred Power of Majesty, which should
Forbid, owns and protects the Violence;
It must not, shall not be; Who steals a Crown
By Arts like these, wears it unworthily.

Clean. The Queen your Mother, Sir! She will expect
You should approve that Act her Power has done.

Artab. I'll meet her as I ought, and show my self
Worthy the Noble Rivalship of Empire.

Enter the Queen, Mirza and Attendants.

Qu. My Son, I come to Joy you of a Crown
And Glory certain now, your Fate at length,
Has Master'd that Malignant Influence
With which it struggl'd long: You are a King,
The greatest that our *Eastern* World beholds,
And tho' my Widow'd Bed be Cause for Grief,

Yet

Yet for thy Sake, my Son, I joy to say,
Arfaces is no more.

Artab. 'Twere vain and foolish,
 To Mourn his Death with Ceremonious Sorrow;
 For tho' he died the Greatest of our Race,
 Yet since decaying Age had sunk him low
 And all the Native Majesty was lost,
 'Twas time the Soul should seek for Immortality,
 And leave the weary Body to Enjoy
 An Honourable Rest from Care and Sickneſs:
 Peace to his Aſhes, and Eternal Fame
 Dwell with his Memory, while we who Live
 Look back with Emulation on his Greatneſs,
 And with Laborious Steps ſtrive to Aſcend
 That Height where once he ſat:

Qu. Thou haſt already
 Attain'd the lofty Summit of his Glory;
 His Throne expects thee but to ſit and fill it.

Artab. No, Madam, when the Gods chuſe worthy Subjects
 On whom to place ſuch Greatneſs, they ſurround
 The Glorious Prize with Toil and thorny Danger,
 And bid the Man who would be Great, Dare greatly.
 Be it for dull Elder Brothers to Poſſeſs
 Without deſerving; Mine's a Nobler Claim,
 Nor will I Taſt the godlike Joys of Power,
 Till Men and Gods with Juſtice ſhall confeſs
 'Tis barely the Reward of what I meant.

Qu. What means my Son?

Artab. To Wreſtle for a Crown!

Qu. With what fantaſtick Shadow wouldſt thou ſtrive?
 The Haughty Rival of thy Hopes is fallen,
 He lives indeed, but 'tis to Grace thy Triumph,
 And Bow before thee; then be ſwept away
 Like the remembrance of an Idle Dream,
 Which tho' of Yeſternight, is now forgotten.

Artab. It greives me much to ſay, my Royal Mother,
 I cannot take a Crown upon theſe Terms
 Tho' even from your Hands: The Conſcious Virtue

That

That witnesses within my Breast for Glory,
Points me to Greatness by the Paths of Honour,
And urges me to do as a King ought,
That would not wear his Purple as the Gift
Of impious Treachery and base Deceit.

Qu. Amazement turns my Senses! Or I Dream!
For sure thou canst not mean so poor a folly.
Hast thou been bred in the Wise Arts of Empire?
Been early taught to know the Worth of Power?
And would'st thou loose the Golden Opportunity
With which thy Fortune Courts thee for a Notion?
An Empty sound of Virtue? a dry Maxim
Which Pedants have devis'd for Boys to Canvas?
Can my Son think so meanly? Go set free
(Since Honour bids) this Lordly Elder Brother
Bow like a Slave before him, wait his Pleasures,
And live a dependant on his scanty Pension;
He may reward thy servile Loyalty,
And make thee ruler of some petty Province
In recompence of Royalty giv'n up.

Artab. No! (tho' I must confess I would not hold him
Caught in a Villains Snare, nor do a Murther
Unworthy of a Hang-man) yet to death
I still defie him as my Mortal Foe,
And since my Father's Fate dissolves that Truce,
To which I stood engag'd; 'tis War again.
Amidst the steely Squadrons will I seek
This haughty Brother, by his Friends surrounded
And back't with all th' Advantages of his Birth,
Then bravely prove upon him with my Sword;
He falsely brands me for a bookish Coward,
That Natures Error only gave him Preference,
Since Fate mean't me the King.

Qu. A Mothers Care is watchful for thy safety,
Else wer't thou lost, thou honourable Fool;
Long might'st thou vainly hunt in Bloody Fields;
For that Advantage which thy willing Fortune
Now reaches to thy hands: In Battles with

H

Un-

Uncertain Wings the wavering Goddess flies,
And oft with partial hand bestows her Favour
On Fools and thick Scull'd Heroes; seize her now
While she is thine, or she is lost for Ever.

Artab. No matter, Let her fly; the Eagle Virtue
Shall soar beyond her and command her flight;
Fortune is not my Mistress but my Slave.
Posterity that reads the Name of *Artaban*
In the Records of Empire, shall not blush
To think I plotted with a Knavish Priest,
The Scandal of his venerable Function
And mark of the God's Vengeance, to betray
A Prince my Enemy; as if being Conscious
Of lesser worth, and of unequal Courage;
I durst not fairly strive with him for Greatness:
Let the abhorr'd and Impious Treachery
Obscurely die, unknown to future Ages;
Or if our Shame must be deliver'd down
By all the Kingly hopes that fire my Soul,
It shall not pass without a brand of Punishment.

Qu. 'Tis wondrous well! Young Man you king rarely!
You mean to be renown'd for early Justice,
And mark your Ostentacious Love of Virtue,
Ev'n in their Bloods, who lift up you to Power;
Perhaps we too, our self must be Arraign'd
Before your puny Bar, and feel your Ax;
'Twill be a Noble Subject for your Praise,
And yield much Matter to declaiming Flatterers.

Artab. You, Madam, are my Mother, Nature blinds me,
And bids me see no Faults in her that bore me;
Those other Slaves that dare——

Qu. May be Immortal,
For ought that thou Can'st do to cause their fate.
Is not thy Power the Creature of my Favour,
Which in precarious wise on me depending,
Exists by my Concurrence to its being?
Mistaken Youth! whose giddy Brain, Ambition

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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Has like the fume of drunken Vapours turn'd ;
Think'st thou that I whose Soul was form'd for Sway,
Would lay the Golden Reins of Empire down?
Or trust 'em to the guidance of a Boy?
Who shall dispose of me, or those that serve me,
According to the dictates of Old Morals,
His bearded Tutor gleans from musty Authors.

Artab. Nay then 'tis time I should Assert my self,
And tho' you gave me Birth ; Yet from the God's
(Who made my Father be as he was, Royal,
And stamp't the mark of Greatness on my Soul)
I Claim my Right to Empire ; may I fall
Vile and forgotten if I Ever own
Any Superiour Being but those God's.

Qu. Thou rav'st ! and hast forgot me.

Artab. No, you are
My Mother, and a Woman, form'd to Obey ;
On that Condition all Sexes Priviledges
Are founded, the Creating Hand has mixt
Softness and Beauty in your Composition,
To Charm and bend the Mind of Man Impatient
Of the Ignoble Pleasure ; you were made for
The weakness and necessities of Nature.
Ill are your feeble Souls for Greatness suited,
Desire of Government is Monstrous in you.

Qu. Thou mighty Goddess Nature ! dost thou hear
This Rebel Son ! this insolent Upbraider !
Still fondly Nurst in my indulgent Bosom !
To build whose future Greatness to the Skies,
My Anxious Soul has labour'd more than when
I felt a Mothers Sorrow for his Birth,
Ungrateful Boy ! —
Know Fool ! that vaunt'st thy self upon thy Manhood,
The greatest he thy rougher kind e're had,
Must have confes't Woman's Superiour Wit,
And own'd our Sexes just Prerogative.
Did not a Mother's fondness plead hard for thee.

Thy Head should pay the forfeit of thy Insolence;
For know (Young King!) that I am Fate in *Persia*,
And Life and Death depend upon my Pleasure.

Artab. The World would be well govern'd, should the God's
Depute their Providence to Women's Care,
And trust them with the Fate of Kings and Empires.

Qu. Yet thou art Safe! away! nor tempt me farther,
The Patience ev'n of God's themselves has limits,
Tho' they with long forbearance view Man's folly.
Yet if thou still persist to dare my Power,
Like them I may be urg'd to loose my Vengeance,
And tho' thou wer't my Creature, strike thee dead.

Mirza. Beseech you Sir, retire; the Queen your Mother
Labour's with wisest fore-sight for your Good,
And is incens'd to see you thwart that purpose.

Artab. What is the good of Greatness but the Power?
Madam I leave you; my own Innate Virtue
Arms me against your Rage Unjust and Impotent,
Wait but the great Success my Soul divines
And you will own your little juggling Arts
Have only serv'd to obstruct a while my Glory,
And Skreen this elder Brother from my Conquest. [*Exit Artaban and*

Qu. Some Envious pow'r above, some Hostile Demon, ^{(Cleanthes.}
Works under-hand against my stronger Genius,
And counter-mines me with Domestick jars.
Malicious Chance! when all abroad was safe,
To start an unseen Danger from my self!

Mirza! did'st thou not mark the haughty Boy?
With what assuming Pride he own'd his daring?
And claim'd superiority of Power?

Oh can I live, and bear to be Controul'd?
To Share the pleasure of Supreme Command,
With him or any one? Oh *Artemisa!*

Did'st thou disdain subjection to a Husband,
The Proudest Title of that Tyrant Man?
And canst thou yield t' a Boy? A Son? By Nature
And grateful Duty to Obedience bound?

Mirza.

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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Mirz. Madam, Let me intreat you, by the God's,
To Calm your just Resentments; Medling Fortune,
(Whose malice labours to perplex the Wife,)
If not prevented, will unravel all
Those finer Arts, which we with Care have wove.
The Prince, led on by this pernicious honour,
May set the Pris'ners free, think, if that happen,
To what a shock of Fate we stand expos'd.

Qu. 'Tis true! this foolish honour ruine's all,
Ridiculous Notion! as if, self-Interest
Were not the first and noblest Law of Nature.
Say then wise Lord, and let thy ready Wit,
Still present to it self, avert this blow.

Mirz. One Method tho' ungentle yet remains
To remedy the Fears this ill produces;
This instant let a Guard confine the Prince;
E're he can gain the means t' Effect that Mischief
He meditates against himself, and us:
To Morrow, early as the Morning dawn's
The Prisoners all shall Die; that once dispatcht,
This raging fit of Honour will relax,
And give him leisure to consider coolly,
Th' Advantage of his Fortune.

Qu. You have Reason;
And tho' I fear his haughty Temper will
But badly brook Confinement, he must learn
To bear it as he can, perhaps 'twill bend him
And make his Youth more plyant to my Will.

Mirz. Your Orders cannot be dispatch't too soon,
Each Minute of the flying Hours is Precious.

Qu. The Eunuch *Bagoas*! let him attend us,
He shall receive Instructions on the Instant.

*Exeunt the
Queen and
Mirza seve-
rally.*

SCENE 2d Mirza's Pallace.

Enter Cleone in Man's Habit, with a dark Lanthorn, Belisa following.

Cleo. Ye gentler Powers who View our Cares with Pity,
Lend your Compassion to the poor *Amestris*;

Oh.

Oh my *Belisa*, was not thy Soul wounded,
To hear, (when now we past by her apartment)
The piercing Accents of her loud Complainings?
By Heaven my aching Heart bleeds for her Sufferings.

Bel. 'Tis sure she feels the bitterest Pangs of Woe,
And were not all my Thoughts to you devoted,
Her Grief would deeply sink into my Soul;
Why will you tempt alone ten thousand Dangers?
Your Father's and the furious Queen's Resentments?
The Cruel Guards? And all those fatal Accidents,
Which in the horror of this Dreadful Night
Might shock the Resolution of a Man?

Cleo. Prithee no more; thou know'st I am resolv'd,
And all thy kind Advice is urg'd in vain.
Thy fond mistaking Fears present the Danger
More dreadful than it is; this Master-key
Admits me thro' that Passage to the Temple,
By which the Guards who seiz'd th' unhappy Prince [Sighing.
This Morning enter'd; that of all the rest
Is only left unguarded, and from thence
Assisted by the friendly Vail of Night,
We may Conduct him thro' my Father's Pallace
In safety to the Street; there undistinguish'd
Amongst the busy discontented Croud,
That swarm in Murmuring heaps he may retire;
Nor shall my Father or the Queen e're know
The Pious fraud my Love was guilty of.

Bel. Yet still I fear—

Cleo. No more! retire and leave me,
My drooping Heart sits lighter than it's wont,
And cheerfully presages good Success.

Bel. Where shall I wait you?

Cleo. At my own Apartment.

Bel. The Mighty Gods Protect you.

Cleo. Softly! Retire; [Exit *Belisa*.

What Noise was that?—The Creature of my fears.
In vain, fond Maid, would'st thou bely thy Sex,
Thy Coward Soul Confesses thee a Woman;

A foolish, rash, fond Woman. Where am I going?
To save my Godlike Hero. Oh my Heart!
It Pants and Trembles; sure 'tis Joy not Fear;
The Thought has given me Courage; I shall save him,
That Darling of my Eyes. what if I fail?
Then Death is in my reach and ends my Sorrows. [Shewing a
Why do'st thou shake, my Hand? And fear to grasp [Dagger.
This Instrument of Fate? If I Succeed,
Yet *Artaxerxes* will not Live for me;
And my Dispair will want thy friendly Aid.
Death ev'ry way shuts up my gloomy Prospect.
If then there be that *Lethe* and *Elisium*
Which Priests and Poets tell, to that dark Stream
My Soul of Life impatient shall make hast.
One healing draught my Quiet shall Restore,
And Love forgotten ne're disturb me more. [Exit Cleone.

SCENE 3d.

A Night Scene of the Temple of the Sun.

Enter Artaxerxes and Memnon.

Artax. Still 'tis in Vain! This idle Rage is Vain!
And yet, my swelling Passions will have way;
And rend my labouring Breast till they find vent.
Was it for this, ye Cruel Gods, you made me
Great like your selves, and as a King, to be
Your Sacred Image? Was it but for this?
To be Cut down, and Mangled by vile Hands,
Like the false Object of mistaken Worship!
Why rather was I not a Pesant Slave?
Bred from my Birth a Drudge to your Creation,
And to my destin'd load inur'd betimes?

Mem. The Malice of our Fate were not Compleat,
Had we not been by just degrees, to Happiness
Rais'd, only to be plung'd the deeper down

In

In an Abyſs of Woes. Early Succeſs
 Met and Attended all my youthful Wars;
 And when I ruſh't amidſt the dreadful Battle,
 The weaker *Genij* of our *Aſian* Monarchs,
 Shrunk from the Force of a Superior Fate;
 O're March't they fell, and by my Sword were ſwept
 Like Common beings from the Glorious Field.
 Then was the day of joyous Triumph, then
 My Soul was lifted high, e'vn to the Stars.
 But now! What am I now? O damn'd reverse of Fortune!
 Now when my Age would be Indulg'd in Eaſe,
 And joy in Pleaſure of my former Fame,
 Now I am Curs't; held at a Villains Mercy,
 My Foe's Deriſion and the Scorn of Cowards.

Artax. Oh! Torture of my Soul! damn'd racking Thought!
 Am not I too reſerv'd for ſervile Vaſſalage?
 To be the Subject of a Boys Command?
 A Boy by Nature ſet beneath my Sway?
 And born to be my Slave! ſhall he Triumph?
 And bid me Live or Die? Shall he diſpoſe
 His Beardleſs Viſage to a Scornful Smile,
 And tell me that his Pleaſure is my Fate?
 No! my diſdainful Soul ſhall ſtruggle out
 And ſtart at once from its diſhonour'd Manſion.

Mem. Oh! Royal thought! Nor ſhall they keep Death from
 Altho' it's common means be not in reach. (us,
 Shall my Old Soldiers outſide rough and hardy,
 Scarr'd o're with many an honourable Mark
 Be cag'd for Publick Scorn? Shall a Dog tell me
 Thus didſt thou once, and now thou art my Slave;
 My foot ſhall ſpurn thee, tread upon thy Neck,
 And trample in the duſt thy Silver Hairs?
 Shall I not rather Choak? Hold in my Breath?
 Or ſmear ſome Wall or Pillar with my Brains?

Artax. Rage or ſome God ſhall ſave us from Diſhonour.
 But oh! my Father! Can we take our flight,
 Tho' to the Stars and leave my Love behind?
 Where is ſhe now? where is my Queen! my Bride!

My

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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My Charmer! my *Amestris*!

Mem. Speak not of her.

Artax. Not speak:—

Mem. Nor think of her if possible.

Artax. Was she not snatch't, torn from my helpless Arms,
Whilst every God look't on and saw the wrong,
Heard her loud Cries which vainly strove to rouse
Their slow unready Vengeance? Was she not
Forc'd from my panting Bosom (yet I live!)
Ev'n on our Bridal Day? Then, when our Flames
Were kindly joyn'd and made but one desire;
Then, when she sigh'd and gaz'd, and blush'd and sigh'd.
When every touch, when every Joy grew fiercer,
And those that were behind were more than Mortal.
To lose her then! Oh!—

And yet you bid me think of her no more?

Mem. I do; for the bare mention turns my Brain,
And ev'n now I border upon Madness;
So dreadful is the very Apprehension
Of what may be.

Artax. Can we make thought go back?
Will it not turn again? Cleave to our Breasts?
And urge remembrance 'till it sting us home?
Ha! Now the Ghastly Scene is set before me;
And as thou said'st it runs me to distraction.
Behold her Beauties form'd for Kings to serve
Held Vile, and treated like an abject Slave!
Helpless amidst her Cruel Foes she stands,
Insulting *Artemisa* mocks her Tears,
And bids her call the God's and me in vain.

Mem. Would that were all.

Artax. Ha! whither would'st thou drive me?

Mem. Did you like me consider that Dog *Mirza*
Early to Hell devoted, and the Furies,
Born, Nurst, and bred a Villain, you would fear
The worst Effects his Malice could express
On Virtue which he hates, when in his Power.

. I

Artax.

Artax. What is the worst?

Mem. What my old faltering Tongue
Trembles to utter; Goatish Lust and Rape.

Artax. Ha! Rape! if there are God's it is impossible.

Mem. Oh! dreadful Image for a Father's thought,
To have his only Child, her Sexes boast,
The joy of sight and comfort of his Age,
Dragg'd by a Villain Slave his ruthless Hand
Wound in her Hair, to some remote dark Cell,
A Scene for Horror fit, there to be blotted
By his foul Lust, 'till Appetite be gorg'd.
Let me grow Savage first, let this old Hand
That oft has blest her in her Blood be drench'd;
Let me behold her dead, dead at my foot
To spare a Father's greater Shame and Sorrow.

Artax. A Father! what's a Father's plague to mine?
A Husband and a Lover! If it can be,
If there is such a hoarded Curse in store,
Transfix me now ye God's, now let your Thunder
Fall on my Head, and strike me to the Centre.
Least if I should survive my ruin'd Honour
And injur'd Love; I should ev'n Curse your Godheads,
Run Banning and Blaspheming thro' the World,
And with my Execrations fright your Worshipers
From kneeling at your Altars.

Enter Cleone with a dark Lanthorn and Key.

Cleo. This way the Ecchoing Accents seem to come,
Sure 'tis the wretched Prince! Oh can you hear him
And yet refuse to lend your Aid ye Gods?

Artax. This Gloom of horrid Night suits well my Soul,
Love, Sorrow, Conscious worth, and Indignation,
Stir mad Confusion in my lab'ring Breast,
And I am all o're Chaos.

Cleo. Is this, alas!
The State of *Artaxerxes*, *Persia's* Heir?
Not one Poor Lamp to cheer the dismal shade

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

59

Of this huge Holy Dungeon ; Slaves Murderers,
Villains that Crosses wait for are not us'd thus ;
I'll shew my self. [*She turns the light and comes towards Art. and Mem.*

Mem. Ha ! whence this gleam of Light ?

Artax. Fate is at hand, let's hast to bid it welcome,
It brings an end of wretchedness.

Cleo. Speak lower.

I am a Friend ; long live Prince *Artaxerxes*.

Artax. What wretch art thou, that hail'st me with a Curse ?
Come from that Cloud that Muffles up thy Face,
And if thou hast a Dagger, shew it boldly.
We wish to die.

Clea. Think better of my Errand,
I bring you Blessings, Liberty and Life,
And come the Minister of happier Fate ; [*Turns the light on her self*
Now down my Blood ! down to my trembling Heart, } *Aside.*
Nor sparkle in my Visage to betray me.

Artax. Ha ! as I live a Boy ! a blushing Boy !
Thou wer't not form'd sure for a Murderers Office,
Speak then and tell me what and whence thou art.

Cleo. Oh ! seek not to unvail a trivial Secret,
Which known imports you not. I am a Youth
Abandon'd to Misfortunes from my Birth,
And never new one Cause to joy in Life,
But this that puts it in my pow'r to save
A Prince like *Artaxerxes*. Ask no more,
But follow thro' the mazes that I tread,
Untill you find your safety.

Artax. Thus forbidding
Thou giv'st me cause t' Enquire ; are then the Guards,
That when the day went down, with strictest watch
Observ'd the Temple Gates, remov'd or fled ?

Cleo. They are not ; but with Numbers reforc'd
Keep every Passage ; only one Remains
Thro' *Mirza's* Pallace, open to your flight.

Mem. Ha ! *Mirza* ! there's Damnation in his Name,
Ruin, Deceit, and Treachery attend it ;
Can Life, can Liberty or safety come

From him? or ought that has an Int'rest in him?
 Rather, suspect this feigning Boy his Instrument,
 To plunge us deeper yet, if possible
 In Misery; perhaps some happy accident
 As yet to us unknown, preserves us from
 The utmost Malice of his hate, while here.
 This sets his wicked Wit at work to draw us
 Forth from this Holy Place, much better be
 The Pris'ners of the God's, than wear his Fetters.

Cleo. Unfortunate Suspicion! what shall I say
 To urge 'em to be safe and yet preserve
 My wretched self unknown?

Artax. Surely that Face,
 Was not design'd to hide dissembled Malice,
 Say Youth art thou of *Mirza's* House? (as sure thou must,
 If thou pretend'st to lead us that way forth;)
 And can'st thou be a Friend of *Artaxerxes*?
 Whom that fell Dog, that Minister of Devils,
 With most opprobrious Injuries has loaded.

Cleo. Tho' I am his, yet sure I never shar'd
 His hate; shall I Confess and own my Shame
 Oh Heavens! ———

} *Aside.*

Mem. Mark th' unready Traytor flammers;
 Half-bred and of the Mungril strain of Mischief,
 He has not Art enough to hide the Cheat,
 His Deep designing Lord had better plotted.
 Away! thinks he so poorly of our Wit,
 To gull us with a Novice? If our Fate
 Has giv'n us up, and mark'd us for Destruction,
 Tell him we are resolv'd to meet it here.

Cleo. Yet hear me Prince; since you suspect me sent
 By *Mirza*, to ensnare you, know I serve,
 Oh God's! to what am I reduc'd! (*Aside*)—his Daughter;
 Some God Compassionate of your Woes has stirr'd
 A Woman's pity, in her softer Breast:
 And 'tis for her I come to give you Liberty.
 I beg you to believe me.

[*She Weeps.*

Artax. See he Weeps!

Mem. The waiting Tears stood ready for Command, And

And now they flow to Varnish the false Tale.

Artax. His Daughter say'st thou? I have seen the Maid,
Dost thou serve her? And could she send thee to me?
'Tis an unlikely Riddle.

Mem. Perhaps 'tis meant,
That she who shares his Poysonous Blood, shall share
The Pleasure of his Vengeance, and inure
The Woman's Hands and Eyes to Death and Mischief.
But thou her Instrument, be gone and say,
The Fate of Princes is not sport for Girls.

Cleo. Some Envious power blasts my Pious purpose,
And nought but Death Remains; O that by that
I might persuade him to believe and trust me;
And fly that Fate which with the Morning waits him. *Aside.*
I grieve my Lord to find your hard Suspicion,
Debars me from preserving your dear Life
(Which not your own *Amestris* wishes more)
To Morrow's dawn (oh! let me yet prevail!)
The Cruel Queen resolves shall be your last.
Oh fly! Let me Conjure you save your self.
May that most awful God that here is worship'd
Deprive me of his chearful Beams for ever,
Make me the wretched'st thing he sees while living,
And after death the lowest of the Damn'd
If I have any thought but for your safety.

Artax. No I have found the Malice of my Mistress,
Since I refus'd her Love when she was proffer'd
By her Ambitious Father for my Bride,
And on a worthier Choice bestow'd my Heart,
She vows Revenge on me for slighted Beauty.

Cleo. My Lord you do her most unmanly wrong,
She own's the Merit of the fair *Amestris*,
Nor ever durst imagine she deserv'd you.
Oh spare that thought, nor blot her Virgin's Fame.
In silence still she wonder'd at your Vertues
Blest you, nor at her own Ill Fate repin'd;
This wounds her most, that you suspect unkindly
Th' Officious Piety that would have sav'd you.

Careless

And

Careless of an offended Father's Rage;
 For you alone concern'd she charg'd me, guide you
 When Midnight Sleep had clos'd observing Eyes,
 Safe thro' her Father's with this Key——
 And if I met with any that durst bar
 Your Passage forth she bid me greet him thus—— [*Stabs her self*
Artax. catching her as she falls.

What hast thou done rash Boy?

Cleo. Giv'n you the last,
 And only Proof remain'd that could convince you,
 I held your Life much dearer than my own.

Mem. Horrid Amazement Chills my freezing Veins!

Cleo. Let me Conjure you with my latest Breath,
 Make hast to seize the means that may preserve you,
 This Key amidst the Tumult of this Night [*Giving the Key.*
 Will open you a way thro' *Mirza's* Palace,
 May every God Assist and Guard your flight;
 And oh when all your hopes of Love and Glory
 Are Crown'd with just Success; will you be good
 And think with Pity on the lost *Cleone*.

Artax. Ten thousand dismal Fancies crowd my Thoughts!
 Oh! is it possible thou can'st be she,
 Thou most unhappy fair one?

Cleo. Spare my Shame,
 Nor call the Blood that flows to give me Peace
 Back to my dying Cheeks. Can you forget
 Who was my Father? and remember only
 How much I wish'd I had deserv'd your Friendship?
 Nay let my Tongue grow bold and say your Love,
 But 'twas not in my Fate.

Artax. What shall I say,
 To witness how my grateful Heart is touch'd?
 But oh why would'st thou give this Fatal instance?
 Why hast thou stain'd me with thy Virgin Blood?
 I swear sweet Saint for thee I could forgive
 The Malice of thy Father, tho' he seeks
 My Life and Crown, thy Goodness might atone
 Ev'n for a Nation's Sins; look up and live,

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The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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And thou shalt still be near me as my Heart.

Cleo. Oh Charming Sounds! that gently lull my Soul
To Everlasting Rest; I swear 'tis more
More Joy to die thus blest than [to have liv'd
A Monarch's Bride; may every Blessing wait you
In War and Peace; still may you be the greatest,
The Favourite of the God's, and Joy of Men——
I faint! oh let me lean upon your Arm—— [She dies.

Artax. Hold up the Light my Father; ha! she Swoons!
The Iron hand of Death is on her Beauties,
And see like Lillies nip't with Frost they Languish.

Mem. My tough old Souldier's Heart melts at the sight,
And an unwonted Pity moves my Breast,
Ill fated Maid too good for that damn'd Race,
From which thou drew'st thy Being! Sure the God's
Angry e're while will be at length appeas'd
With this Egregious Victim; Let us tempt 'em
Now while they seem to smile.

Artax. A beam of Hope,
Strike's thro' my Soul like the first Infant light
That glanc'd upon the Chaos; if we reach
The open City, Fate may be ours again;
But oh whate'r Success or Happiness
Attend my Life, still fair unhappy Maid
Still shall thy Memory be my Grief and Honour.
On one fixt day in each returning Year
Cypress and Mirtle for thy sake I'll wear,
Ev'n my *Amestris* thy hard Fate shall Mourn,
And with fresh Roses Crown thy Virgin urn.
'Till in *Elisium* blest thy gentle Shade
Shall own my Vows of Sorrow justly paid.

Exeunt.

End of the 4th Act.

ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Mirza's Palace.

Enter Mirza, Magas, and Attendants with lights.

Mirz. PHO! You or'e rate the Danger.

Mag. If I do

We err in the Extreams, since you Esteem it
As much too lightly; think you then 'tis nothing
This horrid jar of Tumult and Confusion?
Heads white with Years, and vers'd in long Experience,
Who yet remember all the different Changes
A Rolling Age produces, cannot call
To mind one instance dreadful as this Night.
Infernal Discord hideous to behold,
Hangs like it's evil Genius o're the City,
And lend's a Snake to every vulgar Breast.
From several Quarters the mad Rabble swarm
Arm'd with the Instruments of hasty Rage,
And in Confus'd disorderly Array
Most formidable March; their differing Clamour's,
Together join'd Compose one deafning sound;
Arm! Arm! they Cry, Religion is no more,
Our God's are slighted, whom if we revenge not
War Pestilence and Famine will ensue,
And Universal ruin swallows all.

Mirz. A Crew of mean unthinking heartless Slaves,
With ease stirr'd up to Mutiny and quell'd
With the same ease, with like Expressions shew
Their Joy or Anger both are noise and tumult.
And still when Holidays make Labour cease,
They meet and Shout; do these deserve our Fears?

Mag. Most certainly they may; if we consider

Each

Each Circumstance of Peril that Concurrs ;
Tigranes with the rest that scap'd the Temple,
 Are mixt amongst this Herd, and urge the Wrongs
 Which with the God's their Prince and *Memnon* suffer.

Mirz. Nor need we fear ev'n that, safe in the Aid
 And Number of our Friends, who treble theirs,
 For this mad Rout that hum and swarm together
 For want of somewhat to Employ their Folly ;
 Indulge 'em in their fancy for Religion.
 Thou and thy Holy Brotherhood of Priests,
 Shall in Procession bear the sacred Fire,
 And all our Golden Gods ; Let their Friends Judge
 If still they look not kindly as of Old ;
 'Tis a most apt Amusement for a Crowd,
 They'll gaze, and gather round the gaudy Shew,
 And quite forget the thoughts of Mutiny ;
 A Guard shall wait you.

Mag. Why go not you too with us ?
 They hold your Wisdom in most high regard,
 And will be greatly sway'd by your persuasion,
 Th' occasion is well worth your Care and Presence.

Mirz. O ! you'll not need my Aid : Besides, my Friend,
 My Hours this Night are destin'd to a Task
 Of more import, than are the Fates of Millions
 Such groveling Souls as theirs. As yet the secret
 Is Immature nor worth your present knowledge ;
 To Morrow that and all my Breast is yours.
 I must not, dare not trust him with my weakness,
 'Twill mark me for his scorn, 'tis yet some Wisdom } *Aside.*
 If we must needs be fools to hide our folly.

Mag. He means the Prisoners death, let him engross } *Aside.*
 The Peoples hate, Monopolize Damnation,
 I will be safely Ignorant of Mischief
 Hereafter when your Wisdom shall think fit
 To share those thoughts, and trust 'em with your Friend,
 I shall be pleas'd to know ; This instant Hour,
 My Cares are all employ'd on my own Province,
 Which hast's me hence.

Mirz. May all your God's assist you.

K

Exeunt.
 SCENE

SCENE 2d *An Apartment in Mirza's Palace.**Enter Amestris.*

Ames. Will ye not hear ye ever Gracious God's?
 Since sure you do not Joy in our Misfortunes,
 But only try the strength of our frail Vertue.
 Are not my Sorrows full? Can ought be added?
 My Royal Lord! and Father! ye dear Names
 In which my All of Happiness was sumin'd.
 What have the Ministers of Fate done with you?
 Are you not dead? too sure! that's past a doubt;
 O *Memnon*! oh my Prince! my Father! oh my Husband!

Enter Mirza.

Mirz. Such *Juno* was (except alone those Tears)
 When, upon *Ida's* top, she Charm'd the God
 That long had been a Stranger to her Bed;
 Made him forget the Business of the World,
 And lay aside his Providence, t' Employ
 The whole Divinity upon her Beauty.
 And sure 'twas worth the while, had I been *Jove*,
 So had I too been pleas'd, to be deceiv'd
 Into Immortal Joys. Oh cease thy Tears!——

Ames. Give 'em me back, or if the Grave and Thou
 Restore to none, oh joyn my Fate to theirs;
 Shut us together in some silent Vault,
 Where I may sit and Weep 'till Death's kind Hand
 Shall lay me gently by my Lord's dear side,
 And hush my Sorrows in Eternal Slumber.

Mirz. In pity to your form assuage those Tears,
 Sorrow is Beauty's bane; nor let your Breast
 Harbour a Fear; I wage not War with fair ones;
 But wish you would efface those ugly thoughts,
 That live in your remembrance to perplex you;

Let

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

Let Joy, the Native of your Soul return,
And love's gay God sit smiling in your Eyes,
As Erst he did; I wish you wondrous well,
And would so fully Recompence the Loss
You fondly Mourn, that when you count the Gains,
Your self should own your Fortunes are well chang'd,

Ames. Oh Impious Comforter! talk'st thou of Joy,
When Nature dictates only Death and Horrour?
Is there a God can break the Laws of Fate?
And give me back the pretious lives I've lost?
What nam'st thou Recompence? Can ought atone
For Blood? a Father's and a Husband's Blood?
Such Comfort brings the Hungry Midnight Wolf,
When having slain the Shepheard, smear'd with Gore,
He leaps amid'st the helpless bleating Flock.

Mirz. Away with this Perversities of thy Sex,
These foolish Tears, these peevish Sighs and Sobblings!
Look up be gay and Chear me with thy Beauties,
And, to thy wish I will Indulge thy Fancy,
Nor all the imagin'd Splendor of the God's
Shall match thy Pomp, sublimely shalt thou Shine
The Boast and Glory of our *Asian* World;
Nor shall one She of all thy tawring Sex
Outrival thee (thou lovely fair) in Power,
Oh think on Power, on power and place Supreme.

Ames. There is but one, one only thing to think on,
My Murther'd Lord and his dark gaping Grave,
That waits unclos'd impatient of my coming.

Mirz. Oh listen gentle Maid while I impart
A Story of such softness to thy Ear,
As (like the *Halcyon* brooding o're the Waves)
May with its influence hush thy stormy Griefs.

Ames. Begone, and if thou bear'st one thought of Pity
In that hard Breast; oh leave me to my self,
Nor by thy presence hideous to my Soul,
And horrid Consolations strive to add
To my full woes that swell'd without thy help,
All ready rise and bubble o're the Margent.

Mirz. What if I talk'd of Love?

Ames. Of Love! oh Monster!

Mirz. If Love be Monstrous so is this fair Frame;
This Beauteous World, this Canopy the Sky;
That sparkling shines with Gems of Light innumerable;
And so art thou and I; since Love made all;
Who kindly reconcil'd the jarring Atoms
In friendly league, and bid 'em be a World.
Frame not thy lovely Mouth then to Blaspheme
Thy great Creator, thou art his, and made for
His more peculiar Service; thy bright Eyes,
Thy moist Red Lip, thy rising snowy Bosom,
Thy every part was made to furnish Joy,
Ev'n to a riotous Excess of Happiness;
Oh give me but to tast thy blissful Charms,
And take my Wealth, my Honour, Power, take all,
All, All for Recompence.

Ames. Execrable Wretch!

Thus! Is it thus thou would'st assuage my Sorrows?
When thy inhuman Bloody Cruelty,
Now with redoubling Pangs cleaves my poor Heart,
Com'st thou bespotted with the recent Slaughter
To proffer Impious Love? accursed Fiend!
Horror and Grief shall turn me to a Fury,
Still with my Ecchoing Cries, I will pursue thee,
And hallow Vengeance in thy guilty Ears;
Vengeance for Murther! for my Prince's Murther!
And for my poor old Father think not Villain
Who art the plague and scourge of Human kind;
That there is Peace for thee whilst I run Mad
With raging Sorrow; Vengeance, Vengeance waits thee,
Great as my Woes! — My dear! dear! *Artaxerxes!*

Mirz. I am not lucky at the glossing Art
Of catching Girls with words, but 'tis no matter,
Force is a sure resort, and when at last
Fierce as a tawring Falcon from her height,
I stoop to strike the Prey, it is my own.
Obstinate Fool! how dar'st thou Cross my wishes:

Since

Since the same hand that has aveng'd me well,
Upon my other Foes Commands thy Fate,
Tho' Mercy in Compassion of thy Beauty
Reach out her Hand to save thee, yet if urg'd
Revenge may still take place; think well on that.

Ames. That, that is all the Mercy which I ask,
Indulge thy thirsty Malice in my Blood,
And hasten me to Peace. My Woman's Heart
Shall gather all it's little stock of Courage
To Arm me for the blow. Tho' Death be terrible,
Ghastly and Pale; yet I will joy to meet him;
My better Life already is destroy'd,
Imperfect now and wanting half my self,
I wonder here in vain, and want thy Hand
To guide and re unite me to my Lord.

Mirz. Alas! thou hast not read aright thy Destiny,
Matter of much import requires thy Life,
And still detains thee here; Come, I'll instruct thee,
And put thee in the way of Fates Design. [*laying hold on her.*]

Ames. Unhand me Villain!

Mirz. Nay you must not struggle,
Nor frown and look askew; fantastick Sex!
That put Men on the drudgery to force you
To your own Satisfaction.

Ames. Let me go,
Abhor'd detested Monster! Shall he brave you
You awful God's? Shall not your lightning blast him?

Mirz. Oh no! Your God's have pleasures of their own,
Some Mortal Beauty Charms the wanton *Jove*,
Within whose Arms he Revels; nor has leisure
To mind thy foolish screaming.

Ames. Hear me now, sweet Heaven,
Save me ye God's! oh save me! save me! save me!

Mirz. Come! come along! you see you strive in vain. [*striving*

Ames. Is there no hope of Aid from God's or Men? [*with her.*]
Oh let me turn to thee then, kneel to thee,
And with my Pray'rs and Tears implore thy Pity.

Mirz. Speak, for Inchantment dwells upon thy Tongue,
And

And all the flattering Spirits in my Blood
Dance nimbly on to the Cœlestial Sound.

Ames. What shall I say to move him to Compassion?
Thus groveling, prostrate thus upon the Earth,
Let me Conjure you, spare my Virgin Honour,
Spare to commit a Wrong to you unprofitable;
Yet worse to me than Torments, Racks, and Death,
Kill me the last of my unhappy Race,
And let old *Memnon's* Name with me be lost,
If Death be not enough let me live wretched,
Pull off these Robes and Cloath me like a Slave,
Then send me out to Labour at some Village,
Where I may groan beneath a Cruel Master,
Be hardly us'd and want ev'n Food and Raiment;
'Till Cold, and Dirt, and Poverty shall Change
And make me loathsome as my fellow wretches.
Oh! Let my Rags Claim only this one Priviledge,
To wrap me in the Grave a spotless Maid.

Mirz. That Tongue which pleads makes all intreating vain,
Thy every Motion, each complaining Accent
Warms me afresh and urges new desire;
Thou art, thou must be mine, not Heaven nor Earth,
Nor the Conspiring power of Hell shall save thee;
I long to lose my Age in thy Embraces,
To bask and wanton in thy warmer Sun
'Till a new Youth shoot thro' me.

Ames. Chast *Diana*,
And thou the Guardian of the Marriage-Bed, [*Getting loose*
Thou Royal *Juno*! oh protect thy Votary. *from him*

Msm. My jaded Age and weak Enervate Limbs
Falter and shrink unequal to their Office,
I prithee yeild! Come! yeild and be a Queen! [*Laying hold*
Yeild and be any thing! I cannot bear *on her again*
These fierce convulsive Starts, this raging Flame
That drinks my Blood;

Ames. Oh! never! never! never!
A Cause like this will turn me to a fighter,
To my last gasp to death I will resist.

Mirz.

The Ambitious Step-Mother.

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Mirz. My Coward strength! dost thou go back from Beauty?
Rouze and deserve the Pleasure thou would'st taste.

Ames. Unmanly Traytor!— seize him all ye Fiends.

In the struggle she draws his own Ponyard and stabs him.

Mirza falling] Damnation! oh my Heart! the cursed Steel
Has struck me to the Earth.

Ames. There sink for Ever!

Nor rise again to plague the wretched World.

Mirz. My heated Blood ebbs out, and now too late

My cooler Reason bids me Curse my folly;

Oh! Idiot! Idiot! to be caught so poorly!

Where are thy fine Arts now? Unravell'd all,

Mangled and torn to pieces by a Girl!

Oh Shame of Wisdom! when Revenge was sure,

And Fate was in my grasp, to lose it all,

Neglect the Noble Game, and run out my Years,

On the pursuit of Joys I could not taste;

My Memory must be the jest of Boys.

Ames. My boasted Courage sinks at sight of Blood, [*letting fall*
Tho' justly shed, and I grow stiff with Horror. *the Ponyard.*

Mirza attempting to rise falls again.

It wo't be! life gushes out amain,

And I shall die without Revenge or Aid;

What Noise is that? without there! Help! [*trampling without.*

Ames. Oh Heavens!

What will become of me?

Enter Orchanes hastily.

Orch. My Lord! where are you?

Bleeding! and on the ground! what wretched Accident?—

Then Fate resolves to make this Night Compleat,

Such as succeeding Horrors ne're shall match.

Mirz. Oh my *Orchanes*! I am fall'n vilely,

And this last part of Life will fully all

The Wisdom and Renown of what is past,

Me.

Methought thou talk'st of Horrors, speak 'em boldly,
And try if ought can add to this Confusion.

Orch. Prepare, my Lord, and Summon all your Wisdom,
Your utmost Constancy of Soul to hear——

Mirz. No more! I cannot wait thy Preparation,
Let the ill Fortune take me as it finds me.

Orch. Then hear it thus; your Daughter's dead.——

Mirz. My Daughter!

Thy words have met with at unguarded side,
And pierce ev'n thro' my Soul. Say, how? where? tell me!—

Orch. As with a Guard I kept the Temple Gates,
I heard old *Memnon* and the Pris'ner Prince
Loud as the roaring Ocean in a Storm,
Ecchoing their Rage thro' the vast sounding dome,
When on a sudden e're the Night had gain'd
Four hours at most, the Noise was hush'd in Silence,
Wondring and Curious of the Cause, I enter'd,
And found, oh Grief to fight! your lovely Daughter
Drest like a Boy, then warm and newly dead,
One Wound was on her Breast. Why she was there,
Or how we know not; so Compleat the Ill,
The Pris'ners both are fled.

Mirz. Fled! 'tis impossible!

Ha! which way? whither? how? they could not fly!

Ames. Oh wond'rous turn of Joy, Are they not dead then?

Orch. They could not scape the Guards, no other Passage
Remain'd but your's, and ev'n that was fast.

Upon the instant I beset each Avenue

Which to your Palace leads; happily as yet

They are not past from thence!

Ames. Guard 'em ye God's!

Mirz. Find 'em again *Orchanes*, e're I die,
Or I am more than double damn'd; this Loss

Is worse than mine, worse than my Daughter's Death,

'Tis Death of my Revenge. Malicious Fortune!

She took the Moment when my Wisdom nodded,

And ruin'd me at once. O doating Fool!

Thou Fool of Love and of pernicious Woman!

I sicken! Nature fails me! oh Revenge!
Will not thy Cordial keep back flying Life?
It shall! *Orchanes* drag that traitress to me.

Ames. Oh if thou art a Man I charge thee loose me,
And scorn his bidding, scorn to be his Slave,
A Devil's drudge in Mischief. Save me from Death
Have pity on my Youth, oh spare my Youth!

Orchanes pulls Amestris down to Mirza.

Mirza. Harken not to her! drag her! pull her down!
Shall *Memnon* boast of thee while I die Childless,
No to *Cleone's* Ghost thou art a Victim,
Oh could I but have seen thee with those Eyes
I view thee now, I had been Wife and Safe;
That Face shall make no more Fools in this World,
Down! bear thy fatal Beauties down to Hell,
And try if thou can'st Charm among't the Dead.
Die Witch! Enchantress die! [He stabs her.

Ames. Ah! Mercy Heavens!

Mirza. I thank thee Hand at least for this last service,
Now fly *Orchanes*, hast and tell the Queen
My latest Breath stays for her—Something I would [Exit *Orchanes*.
Important to her Service—I Breath short,
Lifestays in pain, and struggles to be gone,
I strive in vain to hold it——ha! what mean
These fleeting Shades that dance before my sight?
'Tis Death I feel it plain; the dreadful Change
That Nature starts at. Death!—Death!—what is Death?
'Tis a vast disquisition, Priests and Scholars
Enquire whole Ages, and are yet in Doubt.
My Head turns round!—I cannot form one thought
That pleases me about it,——dying——must resolve me.

Ames. Oh my hard Fortune! must I die? die now? [Mirza dies.
When *Artaxerxes* calls and bids me live.
His dear lov'd Image stays my parting Soul,
And makes it linger in its ruin'd House.
Ha! sure he's dead!—'tis so, and now he stands [looking on Mirza.
Arraign'd before the dread Impartial Judges,
To answer to a long Account of Crimes;

L

Had

Had I but strength perhaps my Fate may yet
Find out a way to save me.

[*rising.*

My Love and Father make Life worth my Care,
Alas! My Blood flows fast; this way I think [*goes off faintly*

*Enter at the other side Artaxerxes and Memnon with a Sword and
Dark Lanthorn.*

Mem. Ha! here are Lights! hold up thy Weapon Son.

Artax. And see Blood! and a Body on the floor!
What means this Scene of Death? what Wretch art thou?
Oh all ye juster Powers 'tis *Mirza*! see!
He seems now dead.

Mem. Damnation then is new to him,
And if there be one deeper pit of Sepulchre,
One Plague above the rest in those dark Regions,
He as the most abandon'd Dog may claim it,
And vie for Preference with Devil's themselves.

Re-enter Amestris.

Amesf. The Doors are guarded; Fate has clos'd me round.

Artax. Ha! Art thou my *Amestris*?

Mem. Oh! my Daughter! [*They run to her.*

Amesf. Are ye then come at last to bless my Eyes
That could not close without one parting view.
Oh hold me or I sink! —

Mem. Alas! My Child! —

Artax. My Cruel Fears! why art thou pale and faint?
Ha! whence this Blood? oh killing Spectacle!

Amesf. Forth from my Heart the Crimson River flows,
My lavish Heart that hastily Consumes
Its small remain of Life: Oh lay me gently
On my last Bed the Earth, whose Cold hard Bosom
Must shortly be the place of my long rest.

Mem. What have we done? Or oh if we have sin'd,
What has thy Innocence done to merit this?

Amesf. That Villain *Mirza* —

Mem. Ha! Say what of him.

Amesf. Offer'd most brutal Outrage to my Honour.

Artax. Oh ye Eternal Rulers of the World!
Could you look on unmov'd? But say, instruct me,
That I may bow before the God that sav'd thee.

Ames. Sure 'twas some Chaster Power that made me bold,
And taught my trembling hand to find the way
With his own Ponyard to the Villains Heart.

Mem. Thou art my Daughter still! oh noble Action!
That gives in Death an Interval of Joy.

Ames. Just in that hour of Fate a Villain enter'd,
By whose Assistance the revengeful *Mirza*
Forc'd me to share Death with him.

Artax. 'Tis past, 'tis past; [lying down.
And all fires those that lighted up my Soul
Glory and bright Ambition languish now,
And leave me dark and gloomy as the Grave.
Oh thou soft dying sweetness!— Shall I Rage
And Curse my self? Curse ev'n the God's?—Oh no;
I am the Slave of Fate, and bow beneath
The load that presses me; am sunk to Earth
And ne're shall rise again; here will I sit
And gaze 'till I am nothing.

Ames. Alas! My Lord,
Fain would I strive to bid you not be sad,
Fain would I Chear your Grief; but 'tis in vain;
I know by my own Heart it is impossible;
For we have lov'd too well. Oh mournful Nuptials!
Are these the Joys of Brides? Indeed 'tis hard,
'Tis very hard to part; I cannot leave you,
The Agonizing Thought distracts me; hold me,
Oh hold me fast, Death shall not tear me from you.

Artax. Oh could my Arms fence thee from Destiny,
The God's might launch their Thunder on my Head;
Plague me with Woes treble to what I feel,
With Joy, I would endure it all to save thee;
What shall I say? what shall I do to save thee?
Grief shakes my Frame, it melts my very Temper;
My manly Constancy and Royal Courage
Run gushing thro' my Eyes; Oh my *Amestris*!

Ames. And see my Father! his white Beard is wet
With the sad Dew.

Mem. I try'd to Man my Heart,
But could not stand the Buffet of this Tempest,

It tears me up.—My Child! ha! art thou dying?

Amef. Indeed I am very Sick! oh hold me up,
My Pain encreases, and a Cold damp Dew
Hangs on my Face. Is there no help? no ease?
Have I your Arm my Love?

Artax. Thou hast; My Heart
Dost thou yet hold.

Amef. Say will you not forget me?
When I am laid to moulder in my Tomb?
'Tis sure you will not, still there will be room
For my remembrance in your Noble Heart;
I know you lov'd me truly: Now! I faint!
Oh shield me; shield me from that ugly Fantome
The Cave of Death!—how dark and deep it is!
I tremble at the sight:—'tis hideous horror!—
The gloom grows o're me—Let me not lie there [*Amestris dies.*]

Artax. There Life gave way, and the last Rosie Breath
Went in that Sigh. Death like a Brutal Victor
Already enter'd with rudehaft defaces,
The lovely Frame he has master'd; see how soon
These Starry Eyes have lost their Light and Lustre!
Stay let me close their Lids. Now for the rest
Old *Memnon*! ha! Grief has transfix'd his Brain,
And he perceives me not!—Now what of thee?
Think'st thou to live thou Wretch? Think not of any thing,
Thought is Damnation, 'ris the Plague of Divels
To think on what they are! and see this Weapon
Shall Shield me from it, plunge me in forgetfulness.
Er'e the dire Scorpion thought can rouse to sting me.
Lend me thy Bosom, my cold Bride; Ill Fortune [*Lying by her*
Has done its worst, and we shall part no more;
Wait for me, Gentle Spirit, since the Stars
Together must receive us! [*Stabs himself*] Oh well aim'd!
How foolish is the Coward's fear of Death!
Of Death, the gentlest—surest way to Peace. [*Artax. dies*]

Memnon stands looking on the Bodys some time and then speaks.

Mem. Yet will I gaze! Yet! Tho' my Eys grow stiff
And turn to Steel or Marble; here's a sight
To Bless a Father! These! These were your Gifts,
Ye bounteous Gods! you'll spare my Thanks for 'em,

You gave me Being too, and spun me out
To hoary Wretchedness; away! 'twas Cruelty!
Oh Curfed! Curfed! Curfed four Score Years!
Ye heap of Ills! Ye Monstrous pile of Plagues!
Sure they Lov'd well, the very streams of Blood
That flow from their pale Bosoms meet and miugle.
Stay, let me view 'em better! — Nay! 'tis thus! —
If thou art like thy Mother? — She dy'd too! —
Where is she? — Ha! that Dog, that Villain *Mirza*!
He bears her from me; Shall we not pursue? —
The whirl of Battle comes across me, fly!
Begon! They shall not, dare not brave me thus!
Hey! 'Tis a glorious Sound, rush on my Prince,
We'll start and reach the Goal of Fate at once! [*Runs off.*

Enter on the other side Queen and Attendants with lights.

Qu. Why am I Summon'd with this call of Death?
This is no common Ruine; *Artaxerxes*!
And *Memnon's* Daughter. *Mirza* thou art fallen
In pompous slaughter, Could not all thy Arts,
That Dold about destruction to our Enemies,
Guard thy own Life from Fate? Vain boast of Wisdom
That with fantastick Pride, like busie Children,
Builds Paper Towns and Houses, which at once
The Hand of Chance o'erturns and loosely scatters.

I Att. Oh Dismal Sight, [*Looking out.*

Qu. What is it frights thy Eys?

I Att. Old *Memnon's* Body.

Qu. 'Tis a grateful Horror.

I Att. Upon the Floor the batter'd Carcass lies
Weltring in gore, whilst on the Marble wall
A dreadful mass of Brains, Grey Hair, and Blood
Is smear'd in hideous mixture.

Qu. Fierce despair
Has forc'd a way for the impetuous Soul.
'Tis well he is in peace; — What means this Tumult?

Shout, Clashing of Swords; Enter an Officer, his Sword drawn.

Offic. Fly, Madam, Lest your person be not safe,
The Traytor *Bagoas*, to whose Charge you trusted
The prince your Son, has drawn the Guards to join him;
And now assisted by the furious Rabble,
On every side they charge those few who keep

This

This Palace and the Temple, with loud Out-cries,
 Proclaiming, that they mean to free the Pris'ners.
Orchanes, e're I fled to give you notice,
 Fell by the Prince's hand, the raging Torrent
 Bore down our weak resistance, and pursuing
 With furious haste, ev'n trod upon my flight.
 This instant brings 'em here.

Qu. Let 'em come on,
 I cannot fear; this Storm is rais'd too late,
 I stand secur'd of all I wish already.

Shout and Clashing of Swords again;

Enter Artaban, Cleanthes and Attendants, their Swords drawn.

Artab. Then Virtue is in vain, since base Deceit
 And Treachery have triumph'd o'er the Mighty.
 Oh! Nature, let me turn my Eyes away,
 Lest I am blasted by a Mothers sight.

Qu. Ungrateful Rebel! Do thy impious Arms
 Pursue me for my too indulgent Fondness
 And Care for thee?

Artab. Well has that Care been shewn,
 Have you not foully stain'd my sacred Fame?
 Look on that Scene of Blood; the dire Effects
 Of cruel Female Arts. But oh! what Recompence;
 What can you give me for my murder'd Love?
 Has not the Labyrinth of your fatal Counsels
 Involv'd my fair, my lovely lost *Cleone*?
 By our bright-Gods I swear I will assert
 The Majesty of Manly Government,
 Nor wear again your Chains, still as our Mother
 Be honour'd; rule amongst your Maids and Eunuchs,
 Nor mingle in our State, where mad Confusion
 Shakes the whole frame, to boast a Womans Cunning.

Qu. Thou talk'st as if thy Infant hand could grasp,
 Guide and command the Fortune of the World,
 But thou art young in pow'r. Remember, Boy,
 Thy Father once the Hero of his Age,
 Was proud to be the Subject of my Sway,
 The Warrior of the Womans Wits gave way,
 And found it was his Interest to obey.

And

And dost thou hope to shake off my Command;
Dost thou? The Creature of my forming hand.
When I assert the Power, thou dar'st invade,
Like Heaven I will resolve to be obey'd,
And rule or ruin that which once I made.

Exit Queen and Attendants.

Artab. Let a Guard wait the Queen, tho' nature plead
For reverence to her Person, jealous power
Must watch her subtle and ambitious wit.
Hast thou secur'd the impious Priest *Cleanthes*?
Magas, that wretch, that prostitutes our Gods.

Clean. Already he has met the Fate he merited,
This night the Hypocrite in grand Procession
March'd thro' the City to appease the people,
And bore the Gods along to aid his purpose.
When on a sudden, like a Hurricane,
That Starts at once and ruffles all the Ocean,
Some fury more than Mortal seis'd the Crowd;
At once they rush'd, at once they cry'd revenge;
Then snatch'd, and tore the trembling Priest to pieces.
What was most strange, no Injury was offer'd,
To any of the Brotherhood beside,
But all their Rage was ended in his Death.
Like formal *Justice* that severely Strikes,
And in an *Instant* is serene and calm.

Artab. Oh! my *Cleanthes*, do but cast thy Thoughts
Back on the recent Story of this Night;
And thou with me wilt wonder, and confess
The Gods are great and just. VVell have you mark't
Celestial powers, your righteous detestation
Of Sacrilege, of base and bloody Treachery.
May this Example guide my future sway;
Let Honour, Truth and Justice crown my Reign,
Ne're let my Kingly word be giv'n in vain,
But ever sacred with my Foes remain.
On these foundations, shall my Empire stand,
The Gods shall vindicate my just Command,
And guard that Power they trusted to my hand.

Exeunt Omnes.

End of the 5th Act.

THE

EPILOGUE.

Spoke by Mrs. BRACEGIRDLE.

THE Spleen and Vapours, and this doloful Play,
Have mortify'd me to that height to day,
That I am almost in the mortal Mind,
To die indeed, and leave you all behind.
Know then, since I resolve in Peace to part,
I mean to leave to one alone my Heart.
(Last Favours will admit of no Partage,
I bar all sharing; but upon the Stage.)
To one who can with one alone be blest
The peaceful Monarch of a single Breast.
To One——— but Oh! how hard 'twill be to find
That Phoenix in your Fickle changing Kind!
New Loves, new Interests, and Religious new,
Still your Fantastick Appetites pursue.
Your sickly Fancies loath what you possess;
And every restless Fool would change his Place;
Some weary of their Peace, and quiet grown,
Want to be hoisted up aloft, and shown;
Whilst from the envied height, the wise get safely down.
We find your wavering Temper to our Cost,
Since all our Pains and Care to please is lost.
Musick in vain, supports with Friendly aid
Her Sister Poetry's declining head.
Show but a Mimick Ape, or French Buffoon,
You to the other House in Shoals are gone,
And leave us here to Tune our Crowds alone.
Must Shakespear, Fletcher, and laborious Ben,
Be left for Scaramouch and Harlaquin?
Allow you are unconstant, yet 'tis strange,
For Sense is still the same, and none can change;
Yet even in that you vary as the rest;
And every day New Notions are profess;
Nay there's a Wit has found, as I am told,
New ways to Heaven, despairing of the Old.
He swears he'll spoil the Clerks and Sexton's Trade,
Bells shall no more be rung, nor Graves be made.
The Hearse and Six no longer be in Fashion,
Since all the Faithful may expect Translation.
What think you of the Project? I'm for trying,
I'll lay aside these foolish Thoughts of Dying;
Preserve my Touth and Vigour for the Stage,
And be translated in a good Old Age.

F I N I S.

